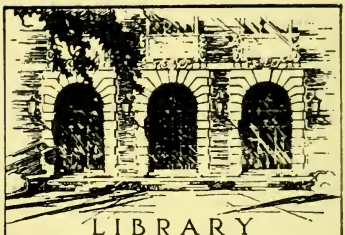

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MRS. HALLIBURTON'S TROUBLES.

BY MRS. HENRY WOOD,

AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE," "THE CHANNINGS," ETC.

" This life of ours is a wild æolian harp of many a joyous strain,
But under them all there runs a loud perpetual wail, as of souls in pain.
* * * * *
All through life there are wayside inns, where man may refresh his soul with love;
Even the lowest may quench his thirst at rivulets fed by springs from above."

LONGFELLOW.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.—THE CLERGYMAN'S DAUGHTER	1
CHAPTER II.—THE SHADOW GROWN INTO SUBSTANCE	23
CHAPTER III.—"FELL DOWN IN A FIT"	33
CHAPTER IV.—NEW PLANS	48
CHAPTER V.—MARGARET	55
CHAPTER VI.—A VISIT TO THE PHYSICIAN	66
CHAPTER VII.—LATER IN THE DAY	87
CHAPTER VIII.—SUSPENSE	97
CHAPTER IX.—LOOKING OUT FOR A HOME	110
CHAPTER X.—A DYING BED	115
CHAPTER XI.—HELSTONLEIGH	130
CHAPTER XII.—ANNA LYNN	141
CHAPTER XIII.—THE FEVER	150
CHAPTER XIV.—THE CHRISTMAS DREAM	162
CHAPTER XV.—THE FUNERAL	181
CHAPTER XVI.—TROUBLE	192
CHAPTER XVII.—THOMAS ASHLEY	208
CHAPTER XVIII.—HONEY FAIR	224
CHAPTER XIX.—MRS. REECE AND DOBBS	233
CHAPTER XX.—THE GLOVE OPERATIVES	245

PAGE

CHAPTER XXI.—THE LADIES OF HONEY FAIR . . 257

CHAPTER XXII.—MR. BRUMM'S SUNDAY SHIRT . . 275

CHAPTER XXIII.—THE MESSRS. BANKES . . . 282

CHAPTER XXIV.—HARD TO BEAR 292

CHAPTER XXV.—INCIPIENT VANITY 301

CHAPTER XXVI.—MR. ASHLEY'S MANUFACTORY . . 312

CHAPTER XXVII.—THE FORGOTTEN LETTER . . 324

MRS. HALLIBURTON'S TROUBLES.

CHAPTER I.

THE CLERGYMAN'S DAUGHTER.

In a very populous district of London, somewhat north of Temple Bar, there stood, many years ago, a low, old church, amidst other churches—for you know that London abounds in them. The doors of this church were partially open one dark evening in December, and a faint, glimmering light might be observed inside by the passers-by.

It was known well enough what was going on inside, and why the light was there. The rector was giving away the weekly bread. A benevolent gentleman had left a certain sum to be expended in twenty weekly loaves, to be given to twenty poor widows at the discretion of the minister. Some curious provisos were attached to the bequest. One was that the bread should not be less than two days old, and should have been deposited in the church at least twenty-four hours previously to the distribution. Another was, that each recipient must attend in person. Failing

personal attendance, no matter how unavoidable her absence might have been, she lost the loaf: no friend might receive it for her, neither might it be sent to her. In that case, the minister was enjoined to bestow it upon 'any stranger widow that might present herself, as should seem expedient to him:' the word 'stranger' being used in contradistinction to the twenty poor widows who were on the books as the charity's recipients. Four times a year, one shilling to each widow was added to the loaf of bread.

A loaf of bread is not much. To us, sheltered in our plentiful homes, it seems as nothing. But, to many a one, toiling and starving, now, in this same city of London, a loaf may be almost the turning-point between death and life. The poor existed in those days, as they exist in these; as they always will exist: therefore it was no matter of surprise that a crowd of widow women, mostly aged, all in poverty, should gather round the church doors when the bread was being given, each hoping that, of the twenty poor widows, some one might fail to appear, and that the clerk would come to the door and call out her own particular name, to go in and be the fortunate substitute. On the days when the shilling was added to the loaf, this waiting and hoping crowd would be increased fourfold.

Thursday was the afternoon for the distribution. And on this day that we are now writing of, the rector entered the church at the customary hour, four o'clock. He had to make his way through an unusual number outside: this being one of the shilling days. He knew them all personally; was familiar with their names, with their homes: for the Rev. Francis Tait was a hard-working clergyman. And hard-working clergymen were more rare in those days than they are in these.

Of Scotch birth, but chiefly reared in England, he had taken orders at the usual age, and become a curate in a London parish, where the work was heavy and the stipend small. Not that the duties pertaining to the church itself were heavy; but it was a parish filled with poor. Those who are familiar with such, know what that means, when the minister is sympathizing and conscientious. For twenty years he remained a curate, patiently toiling, cheerfully hoping. Twenty years! it seems little, to write; but, to live, it is a great, great deal; and Francis Tait, in spite of his hopefulness, sometimes found it so. Then promotion came. The living of this little church, that you now see open, was bestowed upon him. A poor living, as compared with some; and a poor parish, speaking of the social condition of its inhabitants. But the living appeared wealth, after what he had

earned as a curate; and, as to his flock being chiefly composed of poor, he had not been used to anything else. Then the Rev. Francis Tait married; and another twenty years went by.

He stood in the church on this evening; the loaves of bread resting on the shelf overhead, close against the door of the vestry, all near the entrance of the church. A flaring tallow candle with a long snuff stood on the small table between him and the widows who clustered opposite. He was sixty-five years old now; a spare man of middle height, with a clear pale skin, an intelligent countenance, and a thoughtful, fine grey eye. He had a pleasant word, a kind inquiry for all, as he put the shilling in their hands; the lame old clerk at the same time handing over the loaf of bread.

'Are you all here to-night?' he asked, as the distribution went on.

'No, sir,' was the answer from several who spoke at once. 'Betty King's away.'

'What is the matter with her?'

'The rheumaticks have laid hold on her, sir. She couldn't get here nohow. She be in her bed.'

'I must go and see her,' said he. 'What, are you here again, Martha?' he continued, as a little deformed woman stepped from behind the rest, where she had been hidden. 'I am glad to see you.'

'Six blessed weeks this day, and I've not been able to come!' exclaimed the woman. 'But I'm restored wonderful.'

The distribution was approaching its close, when the rector spoke to his clerk. 'Call in Eliza Turner.'

The clerk laid on the table the four or five loaves remaining, that each woman might help herself during his absence, and went out to the door.

''Liza Turner, his Reverence has called for you.'

A sobbing sigh of delight from Eliza Turner, and a wailing groan of disappointment from those surrounding her, greeted the clerk in answer. He took no notice—he often heard it—but turned and limped into the church again. Eliza Turner followed; and another woman slipped in after Eliza Turner.

'Now, Widow Booth,' cried the clerk, sharply, perceiving the intrusion, 'what business have you here? You know as it's again the rules.'

'I must see his Reverence,' murmured the woman, pressing on—a meek, half-starved woman; and she pushed her way into the vestry, and there told her pitiful tale.

'I'm worse off nor Widow Turner,' she moaned piteously, not in a tone of complaint, but of en-

treaty. 'She have got a daughter in service as helps her, but me, I've got my poor unfortunate daughter a lying in my place, weak with fever, sick with hunger. Oh! sir, couldn't ye give the bounty this time to me? I've not had bit or drop in my mouth since morning: and then it was but a taste o' bread and a drain o' tea, as a neighbour give me out o' charity.'

It was essentially necessary to discountenance these self applications. The rector's rule was, never to give the spare bounty to those who applied: otherwise the distribution might have become a weekly scene of squabbling and confusion. He handed the shilling and bread to Eliza Turner; and when she had followed the other women out, he turned to the Widow Booth, who was sobbing against the wall; speaking to her kindly.

'You should not have come in, Mrs. Booth. You know that I do not allow it.'

'But I'm starving, sir,' was the answer. 'I thought maybe as you'd divide it between me and Widow Turner. Sixpence for her, and sixpence for me, and the loaf halved.'

'I have no power to divide the gifts: to do so would be against the terms of the bequest. How is it that you are so badly off this week? Has your work failed?'

'I couldn't do it, sir, with my sick one to attend to. And I've got a gathering come on my thimble-finger, and that have hindered me. I took ninepence the day afore yesterday, sir, but last night it was every farthing of it gone.'

'I will come round and see you by-and-by,' said the clergyman.

She lifted her eyes yearningly. 'Oh, sir! if you could but give me something for a morsel of bread now! I'd be grateful for a penny loaf.'

'Mrs. Booth, you know that, to give here, would be entirely against my rule,' he replied, with unmistakable firmness. 'Neither am I pleased when any of you attempt to ask it. Go home quietly: I have said that I will come to you by-and-by.'

The woman thanked him, and went out. Had anything been wanting to prove the necessity of the rule, it would have been the eagerness with which the crowd of women gathered round her. Not one had gone away; and they pushed up with eager eyes, eager tongues. 'Had she got anything?' To reply that she *had* got something, would have sent the whole lot flocking in, to beg in turn of the rector.

Widow Booth shook her head. 'No, no. I knowed it afore. He never will. He says he'll come round'

They dispersed; some in one direction, some in another. The rector blew out the candle, and he and the clerk came forth; and the church was closed for the distribution of bread until that day week. Mr. Tait took the keys to carry them home himself. They were kept at his house. Formerly the clerk had carried them there; but since he became old and lame, Mr. Tait would not give him the trouble.

It was a fine night over head, but the streets were sloppy; and the clergyman put his foot unavoidably in many a puddle. The streets, through which his road lay, were but imperfectly lighted. The residence apportioned for the rector of this parish was contiguous to a well-known square, fashionable in that day. It was a very good house, bearing a handsome appearance outside: to judge by it, you would have said the living must be worth five hundred a year at the least. It was not worth anything like that; and the parish treated their pastor liberally in according him so good a residence. A quarter of an hour's walk from the church brought Mr. Tait to it.

Until recently, a gentleman had shared this house with Mr. Tait and his family. The curate of a neighbouring parish, the Rev. Mr. Acton, had been glad to live with them as a friend, partaking of their society and their table. It was a little

help; and but for that, Mr. and Mrs. Tait would scarcely have deemed themselves justified in keeping two servants, for the educational expenses of their children ran away with a large portion of their income. But Mr. Acton was now removed to a distance, and they were in hopes of receiving somebody or other in his place.

On this evening, as Mr. Tait was picking his way through the puddles, the usual sitting-room of his house presented a cheerful appearance, ready to receive him. It was on the ground floor, looking to the street, spacious and lofty, and bright with fire. Two candles, not yet lighted, stood on the table behind the tea-tray, but the glow of the fire was quite sufficient for all the work that was being done in the room.

It was no work at all: but play. A young lady was quietly whirling round the room with a dancing step—quietly, because her foot and movements were gentle, in contradistinction to noisy; and the tune she was humming to herself, and to which she kept time, was carolled in an undertone. She was moving thus in the happy innocence of her heart and youth. A graceful girl was she, of middle height; one whom it gladdened the eye to look upon. Not for her beauty, for she had no very great beauty to boast of; but it was one of those countenances that win their own way to

favour. A fair, gentle face it was, openly candid, with the same earnest, honest grey eye that so pleased you in the Rev. Mr. Tait, and brown hair. She was that gentleman's eldest child, and looked about eighteen. In reality she counted a year on to it; but her face and dress were both youthful. She wore a violet silk dress, made with a low body and short sleeves: young ladies did not have their pretty necks and arms covered up then. In the day time, the dress would have shown out old, but it looked very well by candle light.

The sound of the latch-key in the front door brought her dancing to a stand-still. She knew who it was—no inmate of that house possessed a latch-key, save its master—and she turned to the fire to light the candles.

Mr. Tait came into the room, removing neither his overcoat nor hat. 'Have you made the tea, Jane?'

'No, papa; it has but just struck five.'

'Then I think I'll go out again first. I have to call on one or two of the women, and it will be all one wetting. My feet are soaked already'—looking down at his buckled shoes and his black gaiters. 'You can get my slippers warmed, Jane. But'—the thought apparently striking him—'would your mamma like to wait?'

'Mamma had a cup of tea half an hour ago,' replied Jane. 'She said it might do her good;

that if she could get some sleep after it, she might be able to come down for a little while before bed-time. The tea can be had whenever you like, papa. There's only Francis at home, and he and I could wait until ten at night, if you pleased.'

'I'll go at once, then. Not until ten, Miss Jane, but until six, or thereabouts. Betty King is ill; but she does not live far off. And I must step in to the widow Booth's.'

'Papa,' cried Jane as he was turning away, 'I forgot to tell you. Francis says he thinks he knows of a gentleman who would like to come here in Mr. Acton's place.'

'Ah! who is it?' asked the rector.

'One of the masters of the school. Here's Francis coming down-stairs. He went up to wash his hands.'

'It is our new mathematical master, papa,' cried Francis Tait, a youth of eighteen, who was being brought up to the Church. 'I overheard him ask Dr. Percy if he could recommend him to a comfortable residence where he might board, and make one of the family; so I told him perhaps you might receive him here. He said he'd come down and see you.'

Mr. Tait paused. 'Would he be a desirable inmate, think you, Francis? Is he a gentleman?'

'Quite a gentleman, I am sure,' replied Francis.

'And we all like him, what little we have seen of him. His name's Halliburton.'

'Is he in Orders?'

'No. He intends to be, I think.'

'Well, of course I can say nothing about it yet, one way or the other,' concluded Mr. Tait, as he went out.

Jane stood before the fire in thought, her fingers unconsciously smoothing the parting of the glossy brown hair on her well-shaped head, as she looked at it in the pier-glass. To say she never did such a thing in vanity, would be wrong: no pretty girl ever lived yet, but was conscious of her good looks. Jane, however, was neither thinking of herself nor of vanity then. She took a very practical part of home duties: she took, with her mother, a practical part in the out-door life, amidst her father's poor: and just now her thoughts were running on the additional work it might bring to her, did this gentleman come to reside with them.

'What did you say his name was, Francis?' she suddenly asked of her brother.

'Whose?'

'That gentleman's. The new master at your school.'

'Halliburton. I don't know his Christian name.'

'I wonder,' mused Jane, aloud, 'whether he'll

wear out his stockings like Mr. Acton did? There was always a dreadful deal of darning to do to his. Is he an old guy, Francis?'

'Isn't he!' responded Francis Tait. 'Don't you faint when you see somebody come in, old and fat, with green rims to his spectacles. I don't say he's *quite* old enough to be papa's father, but——'

'Why! he must be eighty, then, at least!' uttered Jane, in dismay. 'How could you tell him of it? We should not care to have anybody older than Mr. Acton.'

'Acton! that young chicken!' contemptuously rejoined Francis. 'Put him by the side of Mr. Halliburton! Acton was barely fifty.'

'He was forty-eight, I think,' said Jane. 'Oh, dear! how I should like to have gone with Margaret and Robert this evening!' she exclaimed, forgetting the passing topic in another.

'They were not polite enough to invite me,' said Francis. 'I shall pay the old lady out.'

Jane laughed. 'You are getting too old now, Francis, to be admitted to a young ladies' breaking-up. Mrs. Chilham said so to mamma——'

Jane's words were interrupted by a knock at the front door, seemingly that of a visitor. 'Jane!' cried her brother, in some commotion, 'I should not wonder if it's Mr. Halliburton! He did not say when he should come.'

Another minute, and one of the servants ushered a gentleman into the room. It was not the old guy, however, as Jane saw at a glance; and she felt a sort of relief. A tall, gentlemanly-looking man of five or six and twenty, with thin aquiline features, dark eyes, and a clear, fresh complexion. A handsome man, very prepossessing.

'You see I have soon availed myself of your permission to call,' said he, in a pleasant, cordial tone, as he took Francis Tait's hand, and glanced towards Jane with a slight bow.

'My sister Jane, sir,' said Francis. 'Jane, it's Mr. Halliburton.'

Jane forgot for once her calm good manners. So surprised was she—in fact perplexed, for she did not know whether Francis was playing a trick upon her now, or whether he had previously played it; in short, whether this was, or was not, Mr. Halliburton—that she could only look from one to the other. 'Are you Mr. Halliburton, sir?' she said, in her straightforward simplicity.

'I am Mr. Halliburton,' he answered, bending to her courteously. 'Can I have the pleasure of seeing Mr. Tait?'

'Will you take a seat?' said Jane. 'Papa is out, but I do not expect he will be very long.'

'Where did he go to—do you know, Jane?' cried Francis, who was smothering a laugh.

'To Betty King's; and to Widow Booth's. He may have been going elsewhere also. I think he was.'

'At any rate, I'll just run there, and see. Jane, you can tell Mr. Halliburton all about it while I am gone. Explain to him exactly how he will be here, and how we live. And then you can decide for yourself, sir,' concluded Francis.

To splash through the wet streets to Betty King's or elsewhere, was an expedition rather agreeable to Francis, in his eagerness; otherwise there was no particular necessity for his going.

'I am sorry that mamma is not up,' said Jane. 'She suffers sadly from occasional sick headaches, and they generally keep her in bed for the day. I will give you any information that I can.'

'Your brother Francis thought—thought that it might not be disagreeable to Mr. Tait to receive a stranger into his family,' said Mr. Halliburton, speaking with some hesitation. But the young lady before him looked so entirely lady-like, the house altogether seemed so well-appointed, that he almost doubted whether the proposal would not offend.

'We wish to receive some one,' said Jane. 'The house is sufficiently large, and papa would like it for the sake of society: as well as that it would be a help to our housekeeping,' she added,

in her truthful candour. 'A friend of papa's was with us—I cannot remember precisely how many years, but he came when I was a little girl. It was the Rev. Mr. Acton. He left us last October.'

'I feel sure that I should like it very much; that I should deem myself fortunate if Mr. Tait will admit me,' spoke the visitor.

Jane remembered the suggestion of Francis, and deemed it her duty to speak a little to Mr. Halliburton of 'how he would be there,' as it had been expressed. She might have done it without the suggestion: she could not be otherwise than truthful and open. 'We live quite plainly,' she observed. 'A joint of meat one day; cold, with a pudding, the next.'

'I should deem myself fortunate to get the pudding,' replied Mr. Halliburton, smiling. 'I have been tossed about a good deal of late years, Miss Tait, and have had none too much of comfort. Just now I am in very uncomfortable lodgings.'

'I daresay papa would like you to come,' said Jane, frankly, and feeling a sort of relief herself. She had thought he looked like one who might be over-fastidious.

'I have neither father nor mother, brother nor sister,' he resumed. 'In fact, I may say that I am without relatives: for almost the only one I

have has discarded me. I often think, how rich those people must be who possess dear connexions and a happy home,' he added, turning his bright glance upon her.

Jane dropped her work upon her knee, which she had taken up. 'I don't know what I should do without all my dear relatives,' she exclaimed.

'Are you a large family?'

'We are six. Papa and mamma, and four children. I am the eldest, and Margaret is the youngest; Francis and Robert are between us. It is the breaking-up at Margaret's school to-night, and she is gone to it with Robert,' continued Jane, never doubting but that the stranger must take as much interest in 'breakings-up' as she did. 'I was to have gone; but mamma has been unusually ill to-day.'

'Was it a disappointment to you?'

Jane bent her head while she confessed the fact, as if feeling it were a confession to be ashamed of. 'It would not have been kind to leave mamma,' she added, 'and I dare say some other pleasure will arise for me soon. Mamma is asleep now.'

'What a charming girl!' thought Mr. Halliburton to himself. 'How I wish she was my sister!'

'Margaret is to be a governess,' observed Jane.

'She is being educated for it. She has a great talent for music, and also for drawing: it is not often the two are united. Her tastes lie quite that way—anything clever; and as papa has no money to give us, it was well to make her a governess.'

'And you?' said Mr. Halliburton. The question may have been deemed an impertinent one by many, but he spoke it only in his deep interest, and Jane Tait was of too ingenuous a disposition not to answer it as openly.

'I am not to be a governess. I am to stay at home with mamma and help her. There is plenty to do. Margaret cannot bear domestic duties, or sewing either. Except dancing, I have not learnt a single accomplishment—unless you can call French an accomplishment.'

'I am sure you have been well educated!' involuntarily spoke Mr. Halliburton.

'Yes, I have; in all solid things,' replied Jane. 'Papa has taken care of that. He still directs my readings in literature. I know a good bit—of—Latin,'—she added, bringing out the concluding words with hesitation, like one who repents of his sentence—'though I do not like to confess it to you.'

'Why do you not?'

'Because I think young ladies who know Latin

are laughed at. I did not regularly learn it, but I used to be in the room when papa or Mr. Acton was teaching Francis and Robert, and I picked it up. Mr. Acton often took Francis; he had more time on his hands than papa. Francis is to be a clergyman.'

'Miss Jane,' said a servant entering the room, 'your mamma is awake, and wishes to see you.'

Jane left Mr. Halliburton with a word of apology, and almost immediately afterwards Mr. Tait came in. He was a little taken aback when he saw the stranger. His imagination had run, if not upon an 'old guy' in spectacles, certainly upon some steady, sober, aged mathematical master. Would it be well to admit this young and good-looking man to his house.

If Jane Tait had been candid in her revelations to Mr. Halliburton, that gentleman, in his turn, was not less candid to her father. He, Edgar Halliburton, was the only child of a country clergyman, the Rev. William Halliburton, who had died when Edgar was sixteen, leaving nothing behind him. Edgar—he had previously lost his mother—found a home with his late mother's brother, a gentleman named Cooper, who resided at Birmingham. Mr. Cooper was a man in extensive business, and he desired that Edgar should go into his counting-house. Edgar declined.

His father had lived long enough to form his tastes: his greatest wish had been to see him enter the Church; and the wish had become Edgar's own. Mr. Cooper thought there was nothing in the world like business: he looked upon that most sacred of all callings, God's ministry, only in the light of a profession. He had marked out his own career, step by step, attaining wealth and importance, and he wished his nephew to do the same. 'Which is best, lad?' he coarsely asked: 'To rule as a merchant-prince, or to starve and toil as a curate? I'm not a merchant-prince yet, but you may be.' 'It was my father's wish,' pleaded Edgar in answer, 'and it is my own. I cannot give it up, sir.' The dispute ran high—not in words, but in obstinacy. Edgar would not yield, and at length Mr. Cooper discarded him. He turned him out of doors: he told him that if he must become a parson, he might get somebody else to pay his expenses at Oxford, for he never would. Edgar Halliburton proceeded to London, and obtained employment as an usher in a school, to teach the classics and mathematics. From that he became a private teacher, and had so got his living up to the present time: but he had never succeeded in getting to the university. And Mr. Tait, before they had talked together five minutes, was

charmed with his visitor, and invited him to partake of tea, which Jane came down to make.

'Has your uncle never softened to you?' Mr. Tait inquired.

'Never. I have addressed several letters to him, but they have been returned to me.'

'He has no family, you say, Mr. Halliburton? You ought—in justice, you ought to inherit some of his wealth. Has he other relatives?'

'He has one, standing to him in the same relationship that I do—my cousin Julia. It is not likely that I shall ever inherit a farthing of it, sir. I do not look for it.'

'Right,' said Mr. Tait, nodding his head approvingly. 'There's no thriftless work like that of waiting for legacies. Wearying, too. I was a poor curate, Mr. Halliburton, for twenty years—indeed, so far as being poor goes, I am not much else now—but let that pass. I had a relative who possessed money, and who had neither kith nor kin nearer to her than I was. For the best part of those twenty years I was casting covert hopes to that money; and when she died, and NOTHING was left to me, I found out how foolish and wasteful my hopes had been. I tell my children to trust in their own honest exertions, but never to trust to other people's money. Allow me to urge the same upon you.'

Mr. Halliburton's lips and eyes alike smiled, as he looked gratefully upon the rector, the man so much older than he was. 'I never think of it,' he earnestly said: 'it appears, for me, to be as thoroughly lost as though it did not exist. I should not have mentioned it, sir, but that I deem it right you should know all particulars respecting me; if, as I hope, you will admit me to make one in your home.'

'I think we should get on together very well,' frankly acknowledged Mr. Tait, forgetting the prudential ideas which had crossed his mind.

'I am sure we should, sir,' warmly replied Edgar Halliburton. And the bargain was made.

CHAPTER II.

THE SHADOW GROWN INTO SUBSTANCE.

And yet it had perhaps been well that those prudential ideas had been allowed by Mr. Tait, the clergyman, to obtain weight. Mr. Halliburton took up his abode with them; and, the more they saw of him, the more they liked him. In which liking must be included Jane.

It was a shadow of the possible future, of the effects the step might bring forth, which had whispered determent to Mr. Tait—a very brief shadow, which had crossed his mind but imperfectly, and flitted away again. Where two young and attractive beings are thrown into daily companionship, the result too frequently is, that a mutual regard arises, stronger than any other regard can ever be in this world. This result arrived here.

A twelvemonth passed over from the period of Mr. Halliburton's entrance. How swiftly for him and for Jane Tait, they alone could tell. Not a word had been spoken to her by Mr. Halliburton that he might not have spoken to her mother or

her sister Margaret; not a look on Jane's part had been given, by which he could infer that he was more to her than were the rest of the world. And yet, both were inwardly conscious of the feelings of the other; and when the twelvemonth had gone by, it had seemed to them but a brief span, for the mutual love they bore.

On an evening in December, Jane stood in the dining-room, waiting to make the tea, just as she had so waited that former evening. For any outward signs there were, you might have deemed that not a single hour had elapsed since—that it was the same evening as of old. It was sloppy outside, it was bright in. The candles stood on the table unlighted, the fire was blazing, the tea-tray was placed ready, and only Jane was there. Mrs. Tait was up-stairs with one of her frequent sick headaches; Margaret was with her; and the rest had not come in.

Jane stood in a reverie; her elbow resting on the mantel-piece, and the blaze from the fire flickering on her gentle face. She was fond of these few minutes of idleness on a winter's evening, between the dusk hour and the lighting of the candles.

The clock in the kitchen struck five. It did not arouse her. She heard it in a mechanical sort of manner, without taking note of it. Scarcely had

the sound of the last stroke died away, when there was a knock at the front door.

That aroused her; for she knew it. She knew the footsteps which came in when it was answered, and a rich damask blush arose in her cheeks, and the pulses of her heart went on a little quicker than they had been going before.

She took her elbow from the mantelpiece, and sat down quietly on a chair. No need to look who entered. Some one, taller by far than any in that house, came up to the fire, and bent to warm his hands over the blaze.

'It is a cold night, Jane. We shall have a severe frost.'

'Yes,' she answered; 'the water in the barrel is already freezing over.'

'How is your mamma now?'

'Better, thank you. Margaret is gone up to help her dress. She is coming down to tea.'

Mr. Halliburton remained a minute silent, and then he turned to Jane, his face glowing with satisfaction. 'I have had a piece of preferment offered me to-day.'

'Have you?' she eagerly said. 'What is it?'

'Dr. Percy proposes that, from January, I shall take the Greek classes as well as the mathematics, and he doubles my salary. Of course I shall have

to give more attendance, but I can readily do that. My time is not fully employed.'

'I am very glad,' said Jane.

'So am I,' he answered. 'Taking all my sources of emolument together, I shall now be earning two hundred and eighty-three pounds a year.'

Jane laughed. 'Have you been reckoning it up!'

'Ay. I had a motive.'

His tone was a peculiar one, and it caused her to look at him, but her eyelids drooped under his gaze. He drew nearer and laid his hand gently on her shoulder, bending down before her to speak.

'Jane, you have not mistaken me. I feel that you have read what has been in my heart, what have been my intentions, as surely as if I had spoken. It is not a great income, but it is sufficient, if you can deem it so. May I speak to Mr. Tait?'

What Jane would have contrived to answer she never knew, but at that moment the step of her mother was heard approaching. All she did was to glance shyly up at Mr. Halliburton, and he bent his head lower and kissed her. Then he walked rapidly to the door, and opened it for Mrs. Tait.

A pale, delicate-looking lady, wrapped in a shawl. These violent headaches, from which she so frequently suffered, did not affect her permanent

health, but on the sick days she would be entirely prostrated. Mr. Halliburton gave her his arm, and led her to a seat by the fire, his voice low and tender, his manner sympathizing. 'I am already better,' she said to him, 'and shall be much better after tea. Sometimes I am tempted to envy those who do not know what a sick headache is.'

'They may know other maladies as painful, dear Mrs. Tait.'

'Ay, indeed. None of us can expect to be free from pain of one sort or another in this world.'

'Shall I make the tea, mamma?' asked Jane.

'Yes, child. I shall be glad of it, and your papa is sure not to be many minutes. There he is!' she added, as the latch-key was heard in the door. 'The boys are late this evening.'

The rector came in, and, ere the evening was over, the news was broken to him by Mr. Halliburton. He wanted Jane.

It was that imperfect, uncertain shadow of twelve months ago grown into substance. A shadow of the future only, it had been, you understand; never a shadow of evil. To Mr. Halliburton, personally, the rector had no objection; he had grown to love, to esteem, to respect him; but it is a serious thing to give away a child.

'The income is small to marry upon,' he observed. 'Besides, it is uncertain.'

'Not uncertain, sir, so long as I am blessed with health and strength. And I have no reason to fear that they will fail.'

'I thought you were bent on taking Orders.'

Mr. Halliburton's cheek slightly flushed. 'It is a prospect I have fondly cherished,' he said: 'but the difficulties frighten me. The cost of the university is great, and were I to wait until I had laid by sufficient money for that, I should be obliged, in a great degree, to give up my present means of living. Who would employ a tutor that must be away frequently for weeks? I should lose my connexion, and perhaps never regain it again. A good teaching connexion is more easy to lose than to gain.'

'True,' observed Mr. Tait.

'Once in Orders, I might remain for years and years a poor curate. I should most likely do so. I have neither interest nor influential friends. Sir, in that case Jane and I might be obliged to wait for years: perhaps go down to our graves, waiting.'

The Rev. Mr. Tait cast back his thoughts. How *he* had waited; how he was not able to marry until years were advancing upon him; how in four years now he should have attained threescore years and ten—the term allotted for the life of man—while his children were but yet growing up around him!

No! never, never would he counsel another to wait as he had been obliged to wait.

'I have not yet given up hopes of eventually entering the Church,' continued Mr. Halliburton; though it must be accomplished, if at all, slowly and patiently. I think I may be able to keep one term, or perhaps two terms yearly, without damaging my teaching. I shall try to do so: try to find the necessary money and the time. My marriage will make no difference to that, sir.'

Many a one might have suggested to Edgar Halliburton that he might keep his terms first, and marry afterwards. Mr. Tait did not: possibly, the idea did not occur to him. If it occurred to Edgar Halliburton himself, he drove it away from him. It would have put off his marriage for an indefinite number of years; and he loved Jane too well to do that willingly. 'I shall get much better preferment yet in teaching, than that which I hold at present,' he urged aloud to the rector. 'It is not so very small to begin upon, sir; and Jane is willing to enter upon it.'

'I will not part you and Jane,' said Mr. Tait, warmly. 'If you have made up your minds to share life and its cares together, you shall do so. Still, I cannot say that I think your prospects golden ones.'

'Prospects that appear to have no gold at

all in them sometimes turn out very brightly, sir.'

'I can give Jane nothing, you know.'

'I have never cast a thought to it, sir; I have never expected that she would have a shilling,' replied Mr. Halliburton, his face flushing with his eagerness. 'It is Jane herself I want; not money.'

'Beyond a ten-pound note which I may give her to put in her pocket on her wedding morning, that she may not go out of my house entirely penniless, she will have nothing,' cried the rector, in his plain straightforwardness. 'Far from saving, I and her mother have been hardly able to make both ends meet at the end of the year. I might have put by a few pounds yearly, had I chosen: but you know what a parish this is; and the reflection has always been upon me, how would my Master look upon my putting by bits of money, when many of those over whom I am placed were literally starving for crumbs? I have given what I could; but I have not saved for my children.'

'You have done well, sir.'

The Rev. Mr. Tait sought his daughter. 'Jane,' he began—'Nay, child, do not tremble so! There is no cause for that, or for tears, either: you have done nothing to displease me. Jane, I like Edgar Halliburton. I like him much. There is no one

to whom I would rather give you. But I do not like his prospects. Teaching is precarious.'

Jane raised her timid eyes. 'Precarious for *him*, papa? For one learned and clever as he!'

'It is badly paid. Look how he toils—and he will have to toil more when the new year comes in—and only to earn two or three hundred a year! speaking of it in round numbers.'

The tears gathered in Jane's eyes. Toil as he did, badly paid as he might be, she would rather have him than any other in the world, though that other might have revelled in thousands and thousands. The rector read somewhat of this in her downcast face.

'My dear, the consideration lies with you. If you choose to venture upon it, you shall have my consent, and I know that you will have your mother's, for she thinks there's not such another in the world as Mr. Halliburton. But it may bring to you many troubles.'

'Papa, I am not afraid. If troubles do come, they—you—you told us only last night——'

'What, child?'

'That troubles, regarded rightly, only lead us nearer to God,' whispered Jane, simply and timidly.

'Right, child. And the trouble must come before that great truth can be realised. Con-

sider the question well, Jane,—whether it may not be better to wait—and give your answer to-morrow. I shall tell Mr. Halliburton not to ask for it to-night. As you decide, so shall it be.'

Need you be told what Jane's decision was? Two hundred and eighty-three pounds per annum seems a brave sum to an inexperienced girl; quite enough to buy everything that may be wanted for a fireside.

And so she became Jane Halliburton.

CHAPTER III.

"FELL DOWN IN A FIT."

A HOT afternoon in July. Jane Halliburton was in the drawing-room with her mother, both of them sewing busily. It was a large airy room with three windows, pleasanter than the dining-room underneath, and they were fond of sitting in it in the summer weather. Jane had been married some three or four months now, but she looked the same young, simple, placid girl that she ever did; and, but for the wedding-ring upon her finger, no stranger would have supposed her to be a wife.

An excellent arrangement had been come to—that she and her husband should remain inmates of Mr. Tait's house: at any rate, for the present. When plans were being discussed, previous to making the necessary arrangements for the marriage, and Mr. Halliburton was spending all his superfluous minutes hunting for a house that might suit him, near to the old home and not too dear, Francis Tait had given utterance to a re-

mark—'I wonder who we shall get here in Mr. Halliburton's place, if papa takes anybody else?' and Margaret, looking up from her drawing, had added, 'Why can't Mr. Halliburton and Jane stay on with us? It would be so much pleasanter.' It was the first time that the idea had been presented in any shape to the rector. It seemed to go straight to his wishes; to lay hold of him. He put down a book he was reading, and spoke impulsively: 'It would be the best thing; the very best thing! Would you like it, Mr. Halliburton?'

'I should, sir; very much. But it is Jane who must be consulted, not me.'

Jane, her pretty cheeks covered with blushes, looked up, and said that she should like it also: that she *had* thought of it, but had not liked to mention it, either to her mamma or to Mr. Halliburton. 'I have been quite troubled to think what mamma and the house will do without me,' she added, ingenuously.

'Let Jane alone for thinking and planning, when there's difficulty in the way,' laughed Margaret. 'My opinion is, that we shall never get another pudding, or papa have his black silk Sunday hose darned, if Jane goes.'

Mrs. Tait burst into tears. Like Margaret, she was a bad manager in a house, and had mourned

over Jane's departure, privately believing that she should be half worried to death. 'Oh! Jane, dear, say you'll stop!' she cried. 'It will be such a relief to me! Margaret's of no earthly use, and everything will fall on my shoulders. Mr. Halliburton, I hope you will stop! It will be pleasant for us all. You know the house is large enough.'

And stop they did. The wedding took place at Easter, and Mr. Halliburton took Jane all the way to Dover to see the sea—a long way in those days—and kept her there for a week. And then they came back again, Jane to her old home duties, just as though she was Jane Tait still, and Mr. Halliburton to his teaching.

It was July now, and hot weather; and Mrs. Tait and Jane were sewing in the drawing-room. They were doing work for Margaret. Mr. Halliburton, through some of his teaching connexions, had obtained an eligible situation for Margaret in a superior school. Margaret was to enter as a resident pupil, and receive every advantage towards the completion of her own education; in return for which, she was to teach the younger pupils music, and pay 10*l.* per annum. Such an arrangement was almost unknown then, though it has become common enough since, and Mr. and Mrs. Tait thought of it very highly. Margaret Tait was only sixteen; but, unlike Jane, who

looked younger than her actual years, Margaret looked older. In appearance, in manners, and also in advancement, Margaret might have been judged to be full eighteen.

She was to enter the school, which was situated near Harrow, in another week, at the termination of the holidays, and Mrs. Tait and Jane had their hands full, getting her clothes ready.

'Was this slip measured, mamma?' Jane suddenly asked, after attentively regarding the work she had on her knee.

'I think it was, Jane,' replied Mrs. Tait. 'Why?'

'It looks too short for Margaret. At least, it will be too short when I shall have finished this fourth tuck. It must have been measured, though, because here are the pins in it. Perhaps Margaret measured it herself.'

'Then of course it must be measured again. There's no trusting to anything Margaret does in the shape of work. And yet, how clever she is at her music and her drawing—in fact at all her studies!' added Mrs. Tait. 'It is well, Jane, that we are not all gifted alike.'

'I think it is, mamma,' acquiesced Jane. 'I will go up to Margaret's room and get one of her slips, and measure this.'

'You need not go,' said Mrs. Tait. 'There's

an old slip of hers amongst the work; there, on the sofa.'

Jane found the slip, and measured the one in her hand by it. 'Yes, mamma! It is just the length without the tuck. Then I must take out what I have done of it. It is only a little piece.'

'Come hither, Jane. Your eyes are younger than mine. Is not that your papa coming towards us from the far end of the square?'

Jane approached the window nearest to her, not the one at which Mrs. Tait was sitting. 'Oh, yes, that's papa. You might tell him by his dress, if by nothing else, mamma.'

'I could tell him by himself, if I could see,' said Mrs. Tait, quaintly. 'I don't know how it is, Jane, but my sight does get very imperfect for a distance.'

'Never mind that, mamma, so that you continue to see well for work and reading,' said Jane, cheerily. 'How fast papa is walking!'

Very fast for the Rev. Mr. Tait, who was not in general a quick walker. He entered his house, and came up to the drawing-room. He had not been well for the last few days, and threw himself into a chair, wearily.

'Jane, is there any of that beef-tea left, that was made for me yesterday?'

'Yes, papa,' she said, springing up with alacrity,

that she might get it for him. 'I will bring it to you immediately.'

'Stay, stay, child, not so fast,' he interrupted. 'It is not for myself. I can do without it. I have been pained by a sad sight,' he added, looking at his wife. 'There's that daughter of the widow Booth's come home again. I called in now, and there she is, lying on the mattress, dying from famine, as I verily believe. She came home last night, the mother says, in a dreadful state of exhaustion, and has had nothing within her lips since, but cold water. They tried her with solid food, but she could not swallow it. That beef-tea will just do for her. Get it warmed, Jane.'

'She is a sinful, ill-doing girl, Francis,' remarked Mrs. Tait. 'She does not really deserve compassion.'

'All the more reason, wife, that she should be rescued from death,' said the rector, almost sternly. 'The good may dare to die; the evil may not. Don't waste time, Jane. Put it into a bottle, warm, and I'll carry it round.'

'Is there nothing else that we can send her, papa, that may do for her equally well?' asked Jane. 'A little wine, perhaps? There is but a small portion of the beef-tea left, and it ought to be kept for you.'

'Never mind; I wish to take it to her,' said the rector. 'A drop of wine afterwards may do her good.'

Jane hastened to the kitchen, disturbing a servant who was doing something over the fire. 'Susan, papa wants that drop of beef-tea warmed. Will you make haste and do it, while I look for a bottle to put it in? It is to be taken round to Charity Booth.'

'What! is *she* back again?' exclaimed the servant, in a slighting tone, which told that her estimation of Charity Booth was no higher than was that of her mistress. 'It's just like the master,' she continued, proceeding to do what was required of her. 'It's not often that anything's made for himself; but if it is, he never gets the benefit of it; he's sure to drop across somebody that he fancies wants it worse nor he do. It's not right, Miss Jane.'

Jane was searching in a cupboard. She brought forth a clean green bottle, which held half-a-pint. 'This will be quite large enough, I think.'

'I should think it would!' grumbled Susan, who could not be brought to look upon the giving away of her master's own peculiar property as anything but a personal grievance. 'There's barely a gill of it left, and he ought to have had it himself, Miss Jane.'

'Susan,' said she, turning her bright laughing face towards the woman, 'it is a good thing you went to church and saw me married, or I might think you meant to reflect upon me. How can I be 'Miss Jane,' with this ring on?'

'It's of no good my trying to remember it, miss. All the parish knows you are Mrs. Halliburton, fast enough; but it don't come ready to my tongue's end.'

Jane laughed pleasantly. 'Where is Mary?' he asked.

'In the back room, going on with some of Miss Margaret's things. It's cooler, sitting there, nor in this hot kitchen.'

Jane carried the little bottle of beef-tea to her father, and gave it into his hand. He was looking very pale, and rose from his chair slowly.

'Oh, papa, you do seem so poorly!' she involuntarily exclaimed. 'Let me run and beat you up an egg. I will not be a minute.'

'I can't wait, child. And I question if I could eat it, were it ready before me. I do feel poorly.'

'You ought to have taken this drop of beef-tea yourself, papa. It was made for *you*.'

Jane could not help laying a stress upon the word. The Rev. Mr. Tait placed his hand gently upon her smoothly-parted hair. 'Jane, child, had

I thought of myself before others, throughout life, how should I have been following my Master's precepts?'

She ran down the stairs before him, opening the front door for him to pass through, that even that little exertion should be spared him. A loving, dutiful daughter was Jane; and it is probable that the thought of her worth crossed especially the mind of the rector at that moment. 'God bless you, my child!' he aspirated, as he passed her.

Jane watched him across the square. Their house, though not actually in the square, commanded a view of it. Then she returned up-stairs to her mother. 'Papa thinks he will not lose time,' she observed. 'He is walking so fast.'

'I should call it running,' responded Mrs. Tait, who had seen the speed from the window. 'But, my dear, he'll work no good with that ill-doing Charity Booth.'

About an hour passed away, and it was drawing towards dinner time. Jane and Mrs. Tait were busy as ever, when Mr. Halliburton's well-known knock was heard.

'Edgar is home early this morning!' Jane exclaimed.

He came springing up the stairs, four or five at a time, in great haste, opened the drawing-room

door, and just put in his head. Mrs. Tait, sitting with her back to the door and her face to the window, did not turn round, and consequently did not see him. Jane did; and was startled. Every vestige of colour had forsaken his face.

'Oh, Edgar! You are ill!'

'Ill! Not I,' affecting to speak gaily. 'I want you for a minute, Jane.'

Mrs. Tait had looked round at Jane's exclamation, but Mr. Halliburton's face was then withdrawn. He was standing outside the door when Jane went out. He did not speak; but took her hand in silence and drew her into the back room, which was their own bed-room, and closed the door. Jane's face had grown as white as his.

'My darling, I did not mean to alarm you,' he said, holding her to him. 'I thought you had a brave heart, Jane. I thought that, if I had a little bit of unpleasant news to impart, it would be best to tell *you*, that you may help me soothe it to the rest.'

Jane's heart was not feeling very brave. 'What is it?' she asked, scarcely able to speak the words from her ghastly lips.

'Jane,' he said, tenderly and gravely, 'before I say any more, you must strive for calmness.'

'It is not about yourself! You are not ill?'

The question seemed superfluous. Mr. Halli-

burton was evidently not ill; but he was agitated. Jane was frightened and perplexed: not a glimpse of the real truth crossed her. 'Tell me what it is at once, Edgar,' she said, in a calmer tone. 'I can bear certainty better than suspense.'

'Why, yes, I think you are becoming brave already,' he answered, looking straight into her eyes and smiling—which was intended to reassure her. 'I must have my wife be a woman to-day; not a child. See what a bungler I am! I thought to tell you all quietly and smoothly, not alarming you for a single minute; and look at what I have done!—startled you to terror.'

Jane faintly smiled. She knew all this was but the precursor to some tidings that must be very ill and grievous. By a great effort she schooled herself to calmness. Mr. Halliburton continued:—

'One, whom you and I love very much, has—has—met with an accident, Jane.'

Her fears went straight to the right quarter then. With that one exception by her side, there was no one she loved as she loved her father.

'Papa?'

'Yes. We must break it to Mrs. Tait.'

Her heart beat wildly against his hand, and the livid hue was once more overspreading her face. But she strove urgently for calmness: he was

whispering to her of its necessity for her own sake.

'Edgar! it is death?'

Death it was; but he would not tell her so yet. He plunged into the attendant details.

'He was hastening along with a small bottle in his hand, Jane. It contained something good for one of the sick poor, I am sure, for he was in their neighbourhood. Suddenly he was observed to fall; and the spectators raised him and took him to a doctor's. That doctor, unfortunately, was not at home, and they took him to another, so that time was lost. He was quite unconscious.'

'But you do not tell me!' she wailed. 'Is he dead?'

Mr. Halliburton asked himself a question—What good would be done by putting off the truth? He thought he had performed his task very badly. 'Jane, Jane!' he whispered, 'I can only hope to help you bear it, better than I have broken it to you.'

She could not shed tears in that first awful moment: physically and mentally, she leaned on him for support. '*How* can we tell my mother?'

It was necessary that Mrs. Tait should be told, and without delay. Even then, the body was being conveyed to the house on a shutter. By a

curious coincidence, Mr. Halliburton had been passing the last surgeon's shop at the very moment the crowd was round its doors. Accidental business had called him there; or else it was a street he did not enter once in a year. 'The parson have fell down in a fit,' said some of them, recognising and arresting him.

'The parson!' he repeated. 'What! Mr. Tait?'

'Sure enough,' said they. And Mr. Halliburton pressed into the surgeon's house, just as the examination was over.

'The heart, no doubt, sir,' said the doctor to him.

'He surely is not dead?'

'Quite dead. He must have died instantaneously.'

The news had been wafted to the mob outside, and they were already taking a shutter from its hinges. 'I will go on first and prepare the family,' said Mr. Halliburton to them. 'Give me a quarter of an hour's start, and then come on.'

So that he had but a quarter of an hour for it all. His thoughts naturally turned to his wife: not only the sparing alarm and pain to her, so far as he might, but he believed her, young as she was, to possess more calm self-control than did

Mrs. Tait. As he sped to the house he rehearsed his task; and he might have accomplished it better than he did, but for his tell-tale face. 'Jane,' he whispered, 'let this be your consolation ever: he was fit to go.'

'Oh, yes!' she answered, bursting into a storm of most distressing tears. 'If any one ever was here fit for heaven, it was my dear father.'

'Hark!' exclaimed Mr. Halliburton.

Some noise had arisen down stairs—a sound of voices speaking in an undertone. There could be no doubt that people had come to the house with the news, and were imparting it to the two trembling servants.

'There's not a moment to be lost, Jane.'

How Jane dried her eyes, and suppressed all temporary sign of grief and emotion, she could not tell. The sense of duty was strong within her, and she knew that the most imperative duty of the present moment was the supporting and solacing of her mother. She and her husband entered the drawing-room together, and Mrs. Tait turned with a smile to Mr. Halliburton.

'What secrets have you and Jane been talking together?' Then, catching sight of Jane's white and quivering lips, she burst forth in a cry of agony—'Jane! what has happened?—what have you both come to tell me?'

The tears poured from Jane's fair young face as she clasped her mother fondly to her, tenderly whispering, 'Dearest mamma, you must lean upon us now! We will all love you and take care of you as we have never done.'

CHAPTER IV.

NEW PLANS.

THE *post-mortem* examination established beyond doubt the fact, that the Rev. Francis Tait's death was caused by heart disease. In the earlier period of his life it had been suspected that he was subject to it, but of late years the unfavourable symptoms had not shown themselves.

With him, died of course nearly all his means; and his family, if not left entirely destitute, had little to boast in the way of wealth. Mrs. Tait enjoyed, and had for some time enjoyed, an annuity of fifty pounds per annum; but it would cease with her death, whenever that event should take place. What was she to do with her children? Many a bereft widow, far worse off than Mrs. Tait, has to ask the same perplexing question every day. Mrs. Tait's children were partially off her hands. Jane had her good husband; Francis was earning his own living as an under-usher in a school; with Margaret ten pounds a-year must be paid; and there was Robert,

The death had occurred in July. By October they must be away from the house. 'You will be at no loss for a home, Mrs. Tait,' Mr. Halliburton took an opportunity of kindly saying to her. 'You must allow me and Jane to welcome you to ours.'

'Yes, Edgar,' was Mrs. Tait's unhesitating reply, 'it will be the best plan. The furniture in this house will stock yours, and you shall have it, and you must take me and my bit of means into it—an incumbrance to you. I have been pondering it all over, and I cannot see anything else that can be done.'

'I have no right whatever to your furniture, Mrs. Tait,' he replied, 'and Jane has no more right to it than have your other children. The furniture shall be put in my house, if you please; but you must either allow me to pay you for it, or else it shall remain your own, to be removed again at any time that you may think fit.'

Mr. Halliburton in this was firm, And he was right. Had Mrs. Tait made him a deed of gift of it, her younger children might have risen up later, and reproached Mr. Halliburton with taking their property.

A suitable house was looked for, and taken. The furniture was valued, and Mr. Halliburton bought it—a fourth part of the sum named Mrs. Tait positively refusing to take, for she declared

that so much belonged to Jane. Then they quitted the old house of many years, and moved into the new one: Mr. and Mrs. Halliburton, Mrs. Tait, Robert, and the two servants.

'Will it be prudent for you, my dear, to retain both the servants?' Mrs. Tait asked of her daughter.

Jane blushed vividly, 'We could do with one at present, mamma; but the time will be coming that I shall require two. And Susan and Mary are both so good that I do not care to part with them. You are used to them, too.'

'Ah, child! I know that in all your plans and schemes you and Edgar study my comfort first. Do you know what I was thinking of last night as I lay in bed?'

'What, mamma?'

'When Mr. Halliburton first spoke of wanting you, I and your poor papa felt inclined to hesitate, thinking you might have made a more prosperous match. But, my dear, I was wondering last night what we should have done in this crisis, but for him.'

'Yes,' said Jane, gently. 'Things that appear untoward at the time frequently turn out afterwards to have been the very best that could have happened. God directs all things, you know, mamma.'

A contention arose respecting Robert, some weeks after they had been in their new house—or, it may be better to call it, a discussion. Robert had never taken very kindly to what he called book-learning. Mr. Tait's wish had been that both his sons should enter the Church. Robert had never openly opposed this wish, and for the calling itself he had a liking; but what he particularly disliked was, the study and application necessary to fit him for it. Silent while his father lived, he was so no longer; but took every opportunity of urging the point upon his mother. He was still attending Dr. Percy's school daily.

'You know, mother,' dropping down one day in a chair, in the vicinity of his mother and Jane, and catching up one leg to nurse—rather a favourite action of his—'I shall never get salt at it.'

'Salt at what, Robert?' asked Mrs. Tait.

'Why, at these rubbishing classics. *I* shall never make a tutor, like Mr. Halliburton and Francis do; and what on earth's to become of me? As to any chance of my being a parson, of course that's over: where's the money to come from?'

'What *is* to become of you, then?' cried Mrs. Tait. 'I'm sure I don't know.'

'Besides,' went on Robert, lowering his voice, and calling up the most effectual argument he could think of, 'I ought to be doing something

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for myself. I am living here upon Mr. Halliburton.'

'He is delighted to have you, Robert, interrupted Jane, quickly. 'Mamma pays——

'You be quiet, Mrs. Jane! What sort of a wife do you call yourself, pray, to go against your husband's interests in that manner? I heard you preaching up to the charity children the other day, young lady, about its being sinful to waste time.'

'Well?' said Jane.

'Well! what's waste of time for other people is not waste of time for me, I suppose?' went on Robert.

'You are not wasting your time, Robert.'

'I am. And if you had the good sense that people give you credit for, Madam Jane, you'd see it. I shall never, I say, earn my salt at teaching; and——just tell me yourself whether there seems any chance now that I shall enter the Church?'

'At present I do not see that there is,' confessed Jane.

'There! Then is it waste of time, or not, my continuing to study for a career which I can never enter upon?'

'But what else can you do, Robert?' interposed Mrs. Tait. 'You cannot idle your time out at home, or be running about the streets all day.'

'No,' said Robert, 'better stop at school for

ever than do that. I want to see the world, mother.'

'You—want—to—see—the—world!' echoed Mrs. Tait, bringing out her words slowly in her astonishment, while Jane looked up from her work, and fixed her eyes upon her brother.

'It's only natural that I should,' said Robert, with equanimity. 'I have got an invitation to go down into Yorkshire.'

'What to do?' cried Mrs. Tait.

'Oh, lots of things. They keep hunters, and ——'

'Why, you never were on horseback in your life, Robert,' laughed Jane. 'You would come back with your neck broken.'

'I do wish you'd be quiet, Jane!' returned Robert, reddening. 'I am talking to mamma, not to you. Winchcombe has invited me to spend the Christmas holidays with him down at his father's seat in Yorkshire. And, mother, I want to go; and I want you to promise that I shall not return to school when the holidays are over. I will do anything else that you choose to put me to. I'll learn to be a man of business, or I'll go into an office, or I'd go apprentice to a doctor—anything you like, except stop at these everlasting school-books. I am *sick* of them.'

'Robert, you take my breath away!' uttered

Mrs. Tait. 'I have no interest. I could not get you into any of these places.'

'I dare say Mr. Halliburton could. He knows lots of people. Jane, you talk to him: he'll do anything for you.'

There ensued, I say, much discussion, touching Robert. But it is not with Robert Tait that our story has to do; and only a few passing words need be given to him here and there. It appeared to them all that it would be inexpedient to continue him at school; both with regard to his own wishes, and to his prospects. He was allowed to pay the visit with his school-fellow, and (as he came back with his neck whole) Mr. Halliburton succeeded in placing him in a large wholesale warehouse. Robert appeared to like it very much at first, and always came home to spend the Sunday with them.

'He may rise in time to be one of the first mercantile men in London,' observed Mr. Halliburton to his wife; 'one of our merchant princes, as my uncle used to say, by me, if only——'

'If what? Why do you hesitate?' she asked.

'If he will only persevere, I was going to say. But, Jane, I fear perseverance is a quality that Robert lacks.'

Of course all that had to be proved. It lay in the future.

CHAPTER V.

MARGARET.

From two to three years passed away, and the Midsummer holidays were approaching. Margaret was expected as usual to spend them, and Jane, delighted to receive her, went about her glad preparations. Margaret would not return to the school, in which she had been a paid teacher for the last year; but was to go into a family as governess. For one efficient, well-educated, accomplished governess, to be met with in those days, scores may be counted now—or that profess to be so: and Margaret Tait, though barely nineteen, anticipated to receive her seventy or eighty guineas a year.

A warm, bright day in June, that on which Mr. Halliburton went to receive Margaret. The coach brought her to its resting-place, the 'Bull and Mouth' in St. Martin's-le-Grand, and Mr. Halliburton reached the inn as St. Paul's clock was striking mid-day. One minute more, and the coach drove in.

There she was, inside; a tall, fine girl with a handsome face: a face full of resolution and energy. Margaret Tait had her good qualities, and she had also her faults: a very chief one, speaking of the latter, was self-will. She opened the door herself, and leaped out, before any one could help her, all joy and delight.

'And what about your boxes, Margaret?' questioned Mr. Halliburton, after a few words of greeting. 'Have they come this time, or not?'

Margaret laughed. 'Yes, they really have. I have not lost them on the road, as I did at Christmas. You will never forget to tell me of that, I am sure! It was more the guard's fault than mine.'

A few minutes, and Mr. Halliburton, Margaret, and the boxes were lumbering along in one of the old glass coaches.

'And now tell me about everybody,' said Margaret. 'How is dear mamma?'

'She is quite well. We are all well. Jane's famous.'

'And my precious little Willy?'

'Oh,' said Mr. Halliburton, quaintly, 'he is a great deal too troublesome for anything to be the matter with him. I tell Jane she will have to begin the whipping system soon.'

'And much Jane will attend to you! Is it a pretty baby?'

Mr. Halliburton raised his eyebrows. 'Jane thinks so. I wonder she has not had its picture taken.'

'Is it christened?' continued Margaret.

'It is baptized. Jane would not have the christening until you were at home.'

'And its name?'

'Jane.'

'What a shame! Jane promised me it should be Margaret. Why did she fix upon her own name?'

'I fixed upon it,' said Mr. Halliburton. 'Yours can wait until the next, Margaret.'

Margaret laughed. 'And how are you getting on?'

'Very well. I have every hour occupied.'

'I don't think you are looking well,' rejoined Margaret. 'You look thin and fagged.'

'I am always thin, and mine is a fagging profession. Sometimes I feel terribly weary. But I am pretty well upon the whole, Margaret.'

'Will Francis be at home these holidays?'

'No. He passes them in a gentleman's house in Norfolk—tutor to his sons. Francis is thoroughly industrious and persevering.'

'A contrast to poor Robert, I suppose?'

'Well—yes; in that sense.'

'There has been some trouble about Robert, has

there not?' asked Margaret, her tone becoming grave. 'Did he not get discharged?'

'He got notice of discharge. But I saw the principals, and begged him on again. I would not talk about it to him, were I you, Margaret. He is sensitive upon the point. Robert's intentions are good, but his disposition is fickle. He has grown tired of his place, and idles his hours away; no house of business will put up with that.'

The coach arrived at Mr. Halliburton's. Margaret burst out of it, giving nobody time to assist her, like she had done out of the other coach at the 'Bull and Mouth.' There was a vast deal of impetuosity in Margaret Tait's character. She was quite a contrast to Jane—like, as she had just remarked, there was between Francis and Robert upon other points—to sensible, lady-like, self-possessed Jane, who came forward, so calm, to greet her, a glad depth of affection shining in her quiet eye.

A boisterous embrace to her mamma, a boisterous embrace to Jane, all in haste, and then Margaret caught up a little gentleman of some two years, or more, old, who was standing holding by Jane's dress, his finger in his mouth, and his great grey eyes, honest, loving, intelligent as were his mother's, cast up in a broad stare at Margaret.

'You naughty Willy! Have you forgotten Aunt Margaret? Oh, you darling child! Who's this?'

She carried the boy up to the end of the room, where stood their old servant Mary, nursing an infant of two months old. The baby had great grey eyes, too, and they likewise were bent on noisy Margaret. 'Oh, Willy, she is prettier than you! I won't nurse you any more. Mary, I'll shake hands with you presently. I must take that enchanting baby first.'

Dropping discarded Willy upon the ground, snatching the baby from Mary's arms, Margaret kissed its pretty face until she made it cry. Jane came to the rescue.

'You don't understand babies, Margaret. Let Mary have her again. Come up-stairs to your room, and make yourself ready for dinner. I think you must be hungry.'

'So hungry that I shall frighten you, and tire Mr. Halliburton's arm carving. Of course, with the thought of coming home, I could not touch a bit of breakfast. I hope you have got something nice!'

'It is your favourite dinner,' said Jane, smiling. 'Loin of veal and broccoli.'

'How thoughtful you are, Jane!' Margaret could not help exclaiming.

'Margaret, my dear,' called out her mother, as she was leaving the room with Jane.

Margaret looked back. 'What, mamma?'

'I hope you will not continue to go on with these children as you have begun; otherwise we shall have a quiet house turned into a noisy one.'

'Is it a quiet house, mamma?' said Margaret, laughing.

'As if any house would not be a quiet one, regulated by Jane?' replied Mrs. Tait. And Margaret, laughing still, followed her sister.

It is curious to remark how differently things sometimes turn out from what we design. Had any one asked Mrs. Tait, that day that Margaret came home, what Margaret's future career was to be, she had wondered at the question. 'A governess, certainly,' would have been her answer; and she would have thought that no power, speaking humanly, could prevent it. And yet, Margaret Tait, as it proved, never did become a governess.

The holidays were drawing to an end, and a very desirable situation, as was believed, had been found for Margaret by Mr. Halliburton, the negotiations for which were nearly complete. Mr. Halliburton gave private lessons in sundry families of high connexions, and he was thus enabled to hear where ladies were required as governesses. Thus

he had recommended Margaret. The recommendation was favourably received, and a day was fixed for Margaret to make a personal visit at the family's town house, when she would most probably be engaged.

On the previous evening, at dusk, Mr. Halliburton came home from one of his numerous engagements. Jane was alone. Mrs. Tait, not very well, had retired to rest early, and Margaret was out with Robert. In this, a slack season of the year, Robert had most of his evenings for himself, after eight o'clock. He generally came home, and he and Margaret would go out together. Mr. Halliburton sat down at one of the windows in silence.

Jane went up to him, laying her hand affectionately on his shoulder. 'You are very tired, Edgar?'

He gave no answer in words. He only drew her hand between his, and kept it there.

'You shall have supper at once,' said Jane, glancing at the tray which stood ready on the table. 'I am sure you must want it. And it is not right to indulge Margaret every night by waiting for her.'

'Scarcely, when she does not come in until ten or half-past,' said Mr. Halliburton. 'Jane,' he added, in a kind, confidential tone, 'do you think

it well that Margaret should be out so frequently in an evening?'

'She is with Robert.'

'She may not always be with Robert alone.'

Jane felt her face grow rather hot. She knew her husband; knew that he was not one to speak unless he had some cause. 'Edgar! why do you say this? Do you know anything? Have you seen Margaret?'

'I saw her a quarter of an hour ago——'

'With Robert?' interrupted Jane, more impulsively than she was accustomed to speak.

'Robert was by her side. But she was walking arm-in-arm with Mr. Murray.'

Jane did not much like the information. This Mr. Murray was in the same house that Robert was, holding a better position in it. Robert had occasionally brought him home, and he had taken tea with them. Mrs. Halliburton felt surprised at Margaret: it appeared, to her well-regulated mind, very like a clandestine proceeding. What would she have said, or thought, had she known that Margaret and Mr. Murray were in the habit of thus walking together? Robert's being with them afforded no sufficient plea of excuse.

Later, they saw Margaret coming home, with Robert alone. He left her at the door as usual, and then hastened away to his own home. Jane

said nothing then, but she went to Margaret's room that evening.

'Oh! Edgar has been bringing home tales, has he?' was Margaret's answer, when the ice was broken; and her defiant tone brought, Jane hardly knew what of dismay to her ear. 'I saw him staring at us.'

'Margaret!' gasped Jane, 'what can have come to you? You are completely changed; you—you seem to speak no longer as a lady.'

'Why do you provoke me then, Jane? Is it high treason to take a gentleman's arm, my brother being with me?'

'It is not right to do it in secret, Margaret. If you go out ostensibly to walk with Robert——'

'Jane, I will not listen,' flashed Margaret. 'Because you are Mrs. Halliburton, you assume a right to lecture me. I have committed no grievous wrong. When I do commit it, you may take your turn then.'

'Oh, Margaret! why will you misjudge me?' asked Jane, her voice full of pain. 'I speak to you in love, not in anger; I would not speak at all, but for your good. If the family you are about to enter, the Chevasneys, were to hear of this, they might deem you an unsuitable mistress for their children.'

'Compose yourself,' said Margaret, scoffingly.

Never had she shown such temper, so undesirable a disposition, as on this night; and Jane might well look at her in amazement, and hint that she was 'changed.' 'I shall be found sufficiently suitable by the Chevasney family—when I consent to enter it.'

Her tone was strangely significant, and Jane Halliburton's heart beat. 'What do you mean, Margaret?' she inquired. 'You appear to have some peculiar meaning.'

Margaret, who had been standing before the glass all this while, twisting her hair round her fingers, turned round, and looked her sister full in the face. 'Jane, I'll tell you, if you will undertake to make things straight for me with mamma. I am not going to the Chevasneys—or to anywhere else—as governess.'

'Yes,'—said Jane faintly, for she had a presentiment of what was coming.

'I am going to be married instead.'

'Oh, Margaret!'

'There is nothing to groan about,' retorted Margaret. 'Mr. Murray is coming to speak to mamma to-morrow, and if any of you have aught to say against him, you can say it to his face. He is a very respectable man; he has a good income; where's the objection to him?'

Jane could not say. Personally, she did not

very much like Mr. Murray; and certain fond visions had pictured a higher destiny for handsome, accomplished Margaret. 'I hope and trust you will be happy, if you do marry him, Margaret!' was all she said.

'I hope I shall. I must take my chance of that, as others do. Jane, I beg your pardon for my crossness, but you put me out of temper.'

As others do. Ay! it was all a lottery. And Margaret Tait entered upon her hastily-chosen married life, knowing that it was so.

CHAPTER VI.

A VISIT TO THE PHYSICIAN.

SEVERAL years went on; and years rarely go on without bringing their changes with them. Jane had now four children. William, the eldest, was hard upon thirteen; Edgar, the youngest, going on for nine; Jane and Frank were between them. Mrs. Tait was dead: and Francis Tait was the Reverend Francis Tait. By dint of hard work and perseverance, he had succeeded in becoming qualified for Orders, and he was half starving upon a London curacy, as his father had done for so many years before him. In saying "half starving," I don't mean that he had not sufficient bread and cheese; but when a clergyman's stipend is under one hundred pounds per year, all told, the expression "half starving" is perfectly justifiable. He hungers after many things that he is unable to get, and he *cannot* maintain his position as a gentleman. Francis Tait hungered. Over one want, in especial, he hungered with an intensely ravenous hunger; and that was, the gratification

of his taste for literature. The books he coveted to read were high in price; impossibilities to him; he could not purchase them, and libraries were then scarce. Had Francis Tait not been gifted with very great conscientiousness, he would have joined some teaching with his ministry. But the wants of his parish required all his time; and he had inherited that large share of the monitor, conscience, from his father. 'I suppose I shall get a living some time,' he would think to himself: 'when I am growing an old man, probably, as *he* was when he gained his.' So the Reverend Francis Tait plodded on at his curacy, and was content to wait that far remote day when fortune should drop from the skies.

Where was Margaret? Margaret had bid adieu to old England for ever. Her husband, who had not got promotion in his house of business so rapidly as he judged he ought to have got it, had thrown up his situation, his home and home ties, and had gone out to the woods of Canada to become a settler. Did Margaret repent her hasty marriage then? Did she find that her thorough education, her peculiar tastes and habits, so unfitted for domestic life, were all lost in those wild woods. Music! drawing! languages! literature! of what use were *they* to her now? She might educate her own children, indeed, as they grew

up: the only chance of education it appeared likely they would have. That Margaret found herself in a peculiarly uncongenial sphere, there could be no doubt; but, like a brave woman as she proved herself, not a hint of it, in writing home, ever escaped her, not a shadow of complaint could be gathered. It was not often she wrote, and her letters grew more rare as the years went on. Robert had accompanied them, and he boasted that he liked the life much; a thousand times better than that of the musty old warehouse.

Mr. Halliburton's teaching practice was excellent —his income good. He was now one of the professors at King's College; but he had not yet succeeded in carrying out his vague dream—the getting to the University of Oxford, or of Cambridge. Mr. Halliburton had begun at the wrong end of the ladder: he should have gone to the University first, and married afterwards. He married first: and, to college he never got. A man of moderate means, with a home to keep in respectability, a wife, children, servants, to provide for, has enough to do with his money and time, without expending them at college. He had entirely given up the idea now; and, perhaps, he had grown not to regret it very keenly: his home was one of refinement, of comfort, of thorough happiness.

But about this period, or, indeed, some time prior to it, Mr. Halliburton had cause to believe that he was overtaxing his strength. For a long, long while, almost ever since he had been in London, he was aware that he had not felt thoroughly robust and strong. The hot weather affected him and rendered him languid; the chills of winter gave him a cough; the keen winds of spring would strike to his chest. He would throw off his ailments bravely, and go on again, not heeding much about them, or thinking that they might ever become serious. Perhaps he did not give a glance to that, until one evening, when, upon coming in after a hard day's toil, he sat down in his chair and quietly fainted away.

Jane and one of the servants were standing over him when he recovered—Jane's face sadly pale and anxious.

'Do not be alarmed," he said, smiling at her. 'I suppose I dropped asleep; or lost consciousness in some way.'

'You fainted, Edgar.'

'Fainted, did I! How silly I must have been! The room's warm, Jane: it must have overpowered me.'

Jane was not deceived. She saw that he was making thus light of it to dispel her alarm. She brought him a glass of wine. He drank that, but

he could not eat anything: he frequently could not now.

'Edgar,' she said, 'you are doing too much. I have seen it a long while.'

'Seen what, Jane?'

'That your strength is not equal to your labour. You must give up a portion of your teaching.'

'My dear, how can I?' he asked. 'Does it not take all I get, to meet our expenses? When accounts are settled at the end of the year, have we a superfluous shilling?'

It was so, and Jane knew it; but her husband's health was above every consideration in the world. 'We must reduce our expenses,' she said: 'we must cease to live as we are living now. We will move into a small house, and keep one small servant, and I will turn maid-of-all-work.'

She laughed as she spoke, quite merrily; but Mr. Halliburton detected a serious meaning in her tone. He shook his head.

'No, Jane; that time, I hope, will never come.'

He lay awake all that night, buried in reflection. Do you know what this night-reflection is, when it comes to us in all its racking intensity? Surging over his brain, like the wild waves that chase each other on the foaming ocean, came the thought, 'What will become of my wife and children if I grow ill and die?' Thought after thought, they

all resolved themselves into that one focus:—'I have made no provision for my wife and children: what will become of them if I am taken?'

Mr. Halliburton had one good habit—it was possible that he had learnt it from his wife, for it was hers in no common degree—the habit of *looking steadfastly into the face of trouble*. Not to groan and grumble at it—to sigh and lament that nobody else's trouble ever was so miserable before—but to see how it might best be met and contended with; how the best of it could be made.

The only feasible way he could see, was that of insuring his life. He possessed neither lands nor money to bequeath. Did he attempt to put by a portion of his income, it would take years and years to accumulate into a sum worth mentioning. Why, how long would it take him to amass only a thousand pounds? No. There was but one way—that of life insurance. It was a mode that would have occurred to most of us. He did not know how much it would take from his yearly income to effect it. A great deal, he was afraid; for he was approaching what is called middle life.

He had no secrets from his wife. He consulted her upon every point; she was his best friend, his confidant, his gentle counsellor, and he had no intention of concealing the step he was about to take. Why should he?

'Jane,' he began, when they were at breakfast the next morning, 'do you know what I have been thinking of all night?'

'Trouble, I am sure,' she answered. 'You have been sadly restless.'

'Not exactly trouble, Jane'—for he did not choose to acknowledge, even to himself, that a strange sense of trouble did seem to rest on his heart, and to weigh it down. 'I have been thinking more of precaution than trouble.'

'Precaution?' echoed Jane, looking at him.

'Ay, love. And the astonishing part of the business, to myself, is, that I never thought of the necessity for this precaution before.'

Jane divined now what he meant. Often and often had the idea occurred to her—'Should my husband's health or life fail, we are destitute.' Not for herself did she so much care, but for her children.

'That sudden attack last night has brought reflection to me,' he resumed. 'Life is uncertain with the best of us. It may be no more uncertain with me than with others; but I feel that I must act as though it were. Jane, were I taken, there would be no provision for you.'

'No,' she quietly said.

'And therefore I must set about making one without delay, so far as I can. I shall insure my life.'

Jane did not answer immediately. 'It will take a great deal of money, Edgar,' she presently said.

'I fear it will: but it must be done. What's the matter, Jane? You don't look hopeful over it.'

'Because, were you to insure your life, the paying of the yearly premium, and our living, would necessitate your working as hard as you do now.'

'Well?' said he. 'Of course it would.'

'In any case, our expenses shall be much reduced; of that I am determined,' she went on, somewhat dreamily, more, it seemed, in self-soliloquy than to her husband. 'But, with this premium to pay in addition——'

'Jane,' he interrupted, 'there's not the least necessity for my relaxing my labours. I shall not think of doing it. I may not be very strong, but I am not ill. As to reducing our expenses, I see no help for that, inasmuch as that I must draw from them for the premium.'

'If you only can keep your health, Edgar, it is certainly what ought to be done—the insuring of your life. The thought has often crossed me.'

'Why did you never suggest it?'

'I scarcely know. I believe I did not like to do so. And I really did not see how the premium was to be paid. How much shall you insure for?'

'I thought of two thousand pounds. Could we afford more?'

'I should think not. What would be the yearly premium for that sum?'

'I don't know. I will ascertain all particulars. What are you sighing about, Jane?'

Jane was sighing heavily. A weight seemed to have fallen upon her spirits. 'To talk of life insurance puts me too much in mind of death,' she murmured.

'Now, Jane, you are never going to turn goose!' he gaily said. 'I have heard of persons who will not make a will, because it brings to them a fancy that they must be going to die. The insuring my life will not bring death any the quicker to me: I hope I shall be here many a year yet. Why, Jane, I may live to pay the insurance over and over again, in yearly premiums! Better that I had put by the money in a bank, I shall think then.'

'The worst of putting by money in a bank, or in any other place of security, is, that you are not *compelled* to put it,' observed Jane, looking up a little from her depression. 'What ought to be put by—what is intended to be put by—too often goes in present wants, and the putting by ends but in name; whereas, in life insurance, the premium *must* be paid. Edgar,' she added, going to a different subject, 'I wonder what we shall make of our boys?'

Mr. Halliburton's cheek flushed. "*They* shall go to college, please God—though I have not been able to get there.'

'Oh, I hope so! One or two of them, at any rate.'

Little difficulty did there appear to be in the plan to Mr. Halliburton. His boys should enter the University, although he had not: the future of our children appears hopeful and easy to most of us. William and Frank were in the school attached to King's College: of which, you hear, Mr. Halliburton was now a professor. Edgar—never called anything but 'Gar'—went to a private school, but he would soon be entered for King's College. Remarkably well educated boys, for their years, were the young Halliburtons: Mr. Halliburton and Jane had taken care of that. The home teaching was more efficient than the school: both combined had rendered them unusually intelligent and advanced. Naturally intellectual, gifted with good qualities of mind and heart, Mrs. Halliburton had not failed to do her duty by them. She spared no pains; she knew how children ought to be brought up, and she did her duty well. Ah, my friends! mothers of families! only lay a good foundation in their earlier years, and your children will grow up to bless you.

'Jane, I wonder which office will be the best to insure in?'

Jane began recalling the names of some that sounded familiar to her. 'The Phœnix?' suggested she.

Mr. Halliburton laughed. 'I think that's only for fire, Jane. I am not sure.' In truth, he knew little about insurance offices himself.

'There's the Sun; and there's the Atlas; and the Argus—oh, and ever so many more,' continued Jane.

'I'll inquire all about it to-day,' said he.

'I wonder if the premium will take a hundred a year, Edgar?'

He could not tell. He feared it might. 'I wish, Jane,' he observed, 'that I had insured my life when I first married. The yearly premium would have been small then, and we might have managed to spare it.'

'Ay,' she answered. 'Sometimes I look back to things that I might have done in the past years: and I did not do them. Now, the time has gone by!'

'Well, it has not gone by for the insurance,' said Mr. Halliburton, rising from the breakfast table, and speaking in a gay tone. 'Half-past eight?' he cried, looking at his watch. 'Good-bye, Jane,' said he, bending to kiss her. 'Wish me luck.'

'A good weighty insurance and small premium,' she said, laughing. 'But you are not going about it now?'

'Of course not. I should not find the offices open. I shall take an opportunity of going in the course of the day.'

Mr. Halliburton departed on his usual duties. It was a warm day in April. His first attendance was King's College, and there he remained for the morning. Then he set himself to gain information about the various offices and their respective merits: finally he fixed upon the one he should apply to, and bent his steps to it.

It was situated in the heart of the City, in a very busy part of it. The office also appeared to be busy, for several people were in it when Mr. Halliburton entered. A young man came forward to know his business.

'I wish to insure my life,' said Mr. Halliburton. 'How must I proceed about it?'

'Oh yes, sir. Mr. Procter, will you confer with this gentleman?'

Mr. Halliburton was marshalled to an inner room, where a very gentlemanly man received him. He explained his business in detail, stated his age, and the sum he wished to insure for. Every necessary information was courteously afforded him; and a paper, with certain printed questions on it, was given him to fill up at his leisure, and then to be returned.

Mr. Halliburton glanced it casually over. 'You

require a certificate of my birth from the parish register where I was baptized, I perceive,' he remarked. 'Why so? In stating my age, I have stated it correctly.'

The gentleman smiled. 'Of that I make no doubt,' he said, 'for you look younger than the age you have given me. Our office makes it a rule in most cases to require the certificate from the register; all applicants are not scrupulous to tell the truth, and we have been obliged to adopt it in self-defence. We have had cases, we have indeed, sir, where we have insured a life, and then found —though perhaps not until the actual death has taken place—that the insurer was ten years older than he asserted. Therefore we demand the certificate. It does occasionally happen that applicants can bring men of known probity to testify to their age, and then we do not mind dispensing with it.'

Mr. Halliburton sent his thoughts round in a circle. There was no person in London who knew his age of their own positive knowledge; so it was useless to think of that. 'There will be no difficulty,' he said aloud. 'I can get the certificate up from Devonshire in the course of two or three days, by writing for it. My father was rector of the church where I was christened. This will be all, then? To fill up this paper, and bring you the certificate.'

'All; with the exception of being examined by our physician.'

'What! is it necessary for me to be examined by a physician!' exclaimed Mr. Halliburton. 'The paper states that I must hand in a report from my ordinary medical attendant. *He* will not give you a bad report of me,' he added, smiling, 'for it is little enough I have troubled him. I believe the worst thing he has attended me for has been a bad cold.'

'So much the better,' remarked the gentleman. 'You do not look very strong.'

'Very strong, I don't think I am. I am too hard worked; get too little recreation and rest. It was the suspecting that I am not so strong as I might be, that set me thinking it might be well to insure my life for the sake of my wife and children,' he ingenuously added, in his straightforward candour. 'If I could count upon living and working on till I am an old man, I should not need to insure.'

The gentleman smiled. 'Looks are deceitful,' he observed. 'Nothing more so. Sometimes those who look the most delicate live the longest.'

'You cannot say I look delicate,' returned Mr. Halliburton.

'I did not say it. I consider that you do not look robust; but, that is not saying that you look

delicate. You may be a completely healthy man, for all I can tell to the contrary.'

He ran his eyes over Mr. Halliburton as he spoke; over his tall, fine form, his dark hair, amidst which not a streak of grey mingled, his clearly-cut features, and his complexion, bright as a woman's. Was there suspicion in that complexion? 'A handsome man, at any rate,' thought the gazer, 'if not a robust one.'

'It will be necessary, then, that I see your appointed physician?' asked Mr. Halliburton.

'Yes. It cannot be dispensed with. We would not insure without it. He attends here twice a week. In the intervening days, he may be seen at his residence, Saville-row, from three to five. It is Dr. Carrington. His days for being here are Mondays and Thursdays.'

'And this is Friday,' remarked Mr. Halliburton, 'I shall probably go up to him.'

Mr. Halliburton said 'good morning,' and came away with his paper. 'It's great nonsense, my seeing this doctor!' he said to himself as he hastened home to dinner, which he knew he must have kept waiting. 'But I suppose it is necessary as a general rule; and of course, they wont make me an exception.'

Hurrying over his dinner, in a manner that prevented its doing him any good—as Jane assured

him—he sat down to his desk when it was over, and wrote for the certificate of his birth. Folding and sealing the letter, he put on his hat to go out again.

'Shall you go to Saville-row this afternoon?' Jane inquired.

'If I can by any possibility get my teaching over in time,' he answered. 'Young Finchley's hour is four o'clock, but I can put him off till the evening. I dare say I shall get up there.'

By dint of haste, Mr. Halliburton contrived to get to Saville-row, and arrived there in much heat at half-past four. There was no necessity for his hurrying there on this particular day, but he felt impatient in his own mind to get the business over; as if speed now could atone for past neglect. Dr. Carrington was engaged, and Mr. Halliburton was shown into a room to wait. Three or four others were waiting there; whether ordinary patients, or whether mere applicants of form like himself, he could not tell; and it was their turn to go in before it was his.

But his turn came at last, and he was ushered into the presence of the doctor—a little man, fair, and of reserved speech, with powder on his head.

Of reserved speech in ordinary intercourse, but certainly not of reserved questions. Mr. Halliburton had never been so rigidly questioned before. What disorders had he had, and what had he not

had? What were his habits, past and present? One question came at last: 'Do you feel thoroughly strong?—healthy, elastic?'

'I feel languid in the hot weather,' replied Mr. Halliburton.

'Um! Appetite sound and good?'

'Generally speaking. It has not been so good of late.'

'Breathing right?'

'Yes. It is a little tight sometimes.'

'Um! Subject to a cough?'

'I have no fixed cough. A sort of hacking, dry cough comes on at night occasionally. I attribute it to fatigue.'

'Um! Will you open your shirt?' pointing to its bosom.

'Open my shirt!' exclaimed Mr. Halliburton.

'Just unbutton it here"—touching the front—'and your flannel waistcoat, if you wear one.'

Mr. Halliburton bared his chest in obedience, and the doctor poked at it a good bit with his fingers. Then he sounded it, and then he put down his ear there. Apparently his ear did not serve him efficiently, for he reached some small instrument out of a drawer, placed it on the chest, and then put his ear to that, changing the position of the instrument three or four times.

'That will do,' he said at length.

He turned to put up his instrument again, and Mr. Halliburton drew the edges of his shirt bosom together, and buttoned them.

'Why don't you wear flannel waistcoats?' asked the doctor, with quite a sharp accent, his head down in the drawer.

'I do wear them in the winter; but in the warm weather I leave them off. It was only last week that I discarded them.'

'Was ever such folly known!' ejaculated Dr. Carrington. 'One would think people were born without common sense. Half the patients who come to me say they leave off their flannels in summer! Why, it is in summer that they are most needed! And this warm weather won't last. You go straight home, sir, and put one on.'

'Certainly I will, if you deem it right,' said Mr. Halliburton, with a smile. 'I thank you for telling me.'

He took up his hat and waited. The doctor appeared to wait *for him to go*. 'I understood at the office that you would give me a paper, testifying that you had examined me,' explained Mr. Halliburton.

'Ah—but I can't give it,' said the doctor.

'Why not, sir?'

'Because I am not satisfied with you. I cannot recommend you as a healthy life.'

Mr. Halliburton's pulses quickened a little. 'Sir!' he repeated. 'Not a healthy life?'

'Not sufficiently healthy for insurance.'

'Why! what is the matter with me?' he rejoined.

Dr. Carrington looked him full in the face for the space of a minute before replying. 'I have had that question asked me before, by parties whom I have felt obliged to decline, as I am now declining you,' he said, 'and my answer has not always been palatable to them.'

'It will be palatable to me, sir; in so far as that I do desire to be made acquainted with the truth. What do you find amiss with me?'

'The lungs are diseased.'

A cold chill fell over Mr. Halliburton. 'Not extensively, I trust! Not beyond hope of recovery?'

'Were I to say not extensively, I should be deceiving you; and you tell me that you wish for the truth. They are very extensively diseased——'

A mortal pallor overspread Mr. Halliburton's face, and he sank down upon a chair. 'Not for myself,' he gasped, as Dr. Carrington drew nearer to him. 'I have a wife and children. If I die, they will want bread.'

'But you did not hear me out,' returned the physician, proceeding to continue his sentence

with equanimity, as if he had not been disturbed in it. 'They are extensively diseased, but not beyond a hope of recovery. I do not say it is a strong hope; but a hope there is, as I judge, provided you observe the right means, and take care of yourself.'

'What am I to do? What are the means?'

'You live, I presume, in this stifling, foggy, smoky London.'

'Entirely.'

'Then get away from it. Go where you can have pure air and a clear atmosphere. That's the first and chief thing; and that's essential. Not for a few weeks or months, you understand me—going out for a change of air, as people call it—you must leave London entirely; go away altogether.'

'But it will be impossible,' urged Mr. Halliburton. 'My business lies in London.'

'Ah!' said the doctor, 'too many have been with me with whom it was the same case. But, I assure you that you must leave it; or it will be London *versus* life. You appear to me to be one who never ought to have come to London.—— You were not born in it?' he abruptly added.

'I never saw it until I was eighteen. I was born and reared in Devonshire.'

'Just so. I knew it. Those born and reared

in London get acclimatised to it, generally speaking, and it does not hurt them. It does not hurt numbers who are strangers: they find London as healthy a spot for them as any on the face of the globe. But there are a few who cannot and ought not to live in London; and I judge you to be one.'

'Has this state of disease been coming on long?'

'Yes, for some years. Had you stayed in Devonshire, you might have been a sound man all your life. My only advice to you is—get away from London. You cannot live long if you remain in it.'

Mr. Halliburton thanked the physician and went out. How things had changed for him! What had gone with the day's beauty?—with the blue sky, with the bright sun? The sky was blue still, and the sun shining; but some murky darkness seemed to intervene between his eyes and outward things. Dying? A shiver went through him as he thought of Jane and the children, and a sick feeling of despair settled on his spirit.

CHAPTER VII.

LATER IN THE DAY.

THE man was utterly prostrated. He felt that the fiat of death had gone forth; and there settled an under-current of conviction in his mind, that, for him, there would be no recovery, take what precaution he would. He could not shake it off —nay, he did not try to shake it off—there lay the fact and the fear, like a leaden weight.

He bent his steps towards home, walking the distance; he moved along the streets mechanically —the crowds passed and repassed him, but *he* seemed far away. Once or twice he lifted his head to them with a yearning gesture. 'Oh! that I were like you! bent on business, on pleasure, on social intercourse!' passed through his thoughts. 'I am not as you; and for me you can do nothing. You cannot give me health; you cannot give me life.'

He entered his own home, and there he was conscious of merry voices and flitting footsteps. A little scene of gaiety was going on: he knew

of this, but had forgotten it until that instant. It was the birthday of his little girl, and half a score young friends had been invited to make merry. Jane, looking almost as young, quite as pretty, as when she married him, sat at the far end of their largest room before a well-spread tea-table. She wore festival attire. Her dress was of pearl-grey watered silk, and a thin gold chain was round her neck. The little visitor girls were mostly in white, and the boys were on their best behaviour. Jane was telling them that tea was ready, and her two servants were helping to place the little people, and to wait upon them.

'Oh, and here's papa, too! just in time,' she cried, lifting her eyes gladly at her husband. 'That is delightful!'

Mr. Halliburton welcomed the children. He kissed some, he talked to others, just as if he had not that terrible vulture of care within him. *They* saw nothing amiss; neither did Jane. He took his seat, and drank his tea; all, as it were, mechanically—it did not seem to be himself; he thought it must be somebody else. In the last hour, his whole identity appeared to have changed. Bread-and-butter was handed to him. He took a slice, and left it. Jane put a piece of cake on his plate: he left that. Eat! with that awful veto racking his senses! No, it was not possible.

He looked round on his children. *His.* William, a gentle boy, with his mother's calm, good face, and her earnest eyes; Jane, a lovely child, with fair curls flowing, and a bright colour on her cheeks, consciously vain this evening in her white birthday robes and her white ribbons; Frank, a dark-eyed, slim boy, always in mischief, his features handsome and clearly cut as were his father's; Gar, a delicate little chap, with fair curls like his sister Jane's. Must he *leave* these children?—abandon them to the mercies of a cold and cruel world?—bequeath them no place in it; no means of support? 'Oh, God! Oh, God!' broke from his bitter heart, 'if it be Thy will to take me, mayst Thou shelter them!'

'Edgar!'

He started palpably; so far in thought was he away. Yet it was only his wife who spoke to him.

'Edgar, have you been up to Dr. Carrington's?' she whispered, bending towards him.

In his confusion he muttered some unintelligible words, which she took for a denial; there was a vast deal of buzzing just then from the young voices around. Two of the gentlemen, Frank being one, were in a hot contention touching a third gentleman's rabbits. Mrs. Halliburton called Frank to order, and said no more to her husband for the present.

'We are to dance after tea,' said Jane. 'I have been learning one quadrille to play. It is very easy, and mamma says I play it quite nicely.'

'Oh, we don't want dancing,' grumbled one of the boys. 'We'd like blindman's-buff.'

Opinions were divided again. The young ladies wanted dancing, the boys blindman's-buff. Mrs. Halliburton was appealed to.

'I think it must be dancing first, and blindman's-buff afterwards,' said she.

Tea over, the furniture was pushed aside, to leave a clear space for the dancers. Mr. Halliburton, his back against the wall, stood looking at them. Looking at them, as was supposed; but, had they been keen observers, they would have known that his eyes in reality saw not: they, like his thoughts, were far away.

His wife did presently notice that he seemed particularly abstracted. She came up to him; he was standing with his arms folded, his head bent. 'Edgar, are you well?'

'Well? Oh, yes, dear,' he replied, making an effort to rouse himself.

'I hope you have no more teaching to go out to, to-night?'

'I ought to go to young Finchley. I put him off till seven o'clock.'

'Then'—was her quick rejoinder—'if you put

off young Finchley, how was it you could not get to Saville-row?'

'I have been occupied all the afternoon, Jane,' he said. Wanting the courage to say how the matter really stood, he evaded the question.

But, to go to young Finchley, or to any other pupil that night, Mr. Halliburton felt himself physically unequal to. Teach! Explain abstruse rules in Greek and Latin, with his mind in its present tune! It seemed to him that it little mattered—if he was to be taken from them so soon—whether he ever taught again. He was in the very depths of depression!

Suddenly, as he stood looking on, a thought came flashing over him like a ray of light. Like a *ray* of light? Nay, like a whole gushing flood of it. What if Dr. Carrington was wrong?—if it should prove that, in reality, nothing was the matter with him? Doctors—and very clever ones—were, he knew, sometimes mistaken in their opinions. Perhaps Dr. Carrington was!

It was *scarcely* likely, he went on to reason, that a mortal disease should have seized upon him, and he to have lived in ignorance of it! Why, he seemed to have had very little the matter with him; nothing to talk of, nothing to lie by for: comparatively speaking, he had been a healthy man—was in health then. Yes, the belief did

present itself, that Dr. Carrington was deceived. He, in the interests of the insurance office, might be over-cautious.

Mr. Halliburton left the wall, and grew cheerful and gay, and talked freely to the children. One little lady asked if he would dance with her. He laughed, and felt half inclined to do so.

Which was the real mood—that sombre one, or this? Was there nothing *false* about this one—was there no secret consciousness that it did not accord with the actual belief of his mind; that he was but forcing it forth? Be it as it would, it did not last: in the very middle of a gay sentence to his own little Janey, the old agony, the fear, returned—returned with terrific violence, like a torrent that has burst its bounds.

'I *cannot* bear this uncertainty!' he murmured to himself. And he went out of the room and took up his hat. Mrs. Halliburton, who at that moment happened to be crossing from another room, saw him open the hall-door.

'Are you going to young Finchley, Edgar?'

'No. I shall give him holiday for to-night. I shall be in soon, Jane.'

He went straight to their own family medical attendant; a Mr. Allen, who lived close by. They were personal friends.

To the inquiry of whether Mr. Allen was at

home, the servant was about to usher him into the family sitting-room, but Mr. Halliburton stepped into the dusky surgery. He was in no mood for ladies' company. 'I'll wait here,' he said. 'Tell your master I wish to say just a word to him.'

The surgeon came immediately, a lighted candle in his hand. He was a dark man with a thin face. 'Why won't you come in?' he asked. 'There's only Mrs. Allen and the girls. Is anything the matter?'

'Yes, Allen, there is something the matter,' was the reply of Mr. Halliburton. 'I want a friend this night; one who will deal with me candidly and openly: and I come to you. Sit down.'

They both sat down; and Mr. Halliburton gave him the history of the past four-and-twenty hours: commencing with the fainting-fit, and ending with his racking doubts as to whether Dr. Carrington's opinion was warranted by facts, or whether he might have been deceived. 'Allen,' he concluded, 'you must see what you can make out of my state; and you must report to me without disguise, as you would report to your own soul.'

The surgeon looked grave. 'Carrington is a clever man,' he said. 'One whom it would be difficult to deceive.'

'I know what his reputation is. But these clever men are not infallible. Put his opinion out of your mind: examine me for yourself, and tell me what you think.'

Mr. Allen proceeded to do so. He first of all asked Mr. Halliburton a few general questions as to his present state of health, as he would have done by any other patient, and then he tested his chest and lungs.

'Now then—the truth,' said Mr. Halliburton.

'The truth is—so far as I can judge—that you are in no present danger whatever.'

'Neither did Dr. Carrington say I was—in present danger,' hastily replied Mr. Halliburton. 'Are my lungs sound?'

'They are not sound; but neither do I think they are very extensively diseased. You may live for many years, with care.'

'Would any insurance office take me?'

'No. I do not think it would.'

'It is just my death-knell, Allen.'

'If you look at it in that dark light, I shall be very sorry to have given you my opinion,' observed the surgeon. 'I repeat that, by dint of taking care of yourself, you may stave off the disease, and live many years. I would not say this unless I thought it.'

'And, would your opinion be the same as the

doctor's—that I must quit London for the country?'

'I think you would have a far better chance of getting well in the country than you have here. You have told me over and over again, you know, that you were sure London air was bad for you.'

'Ay, I have,' replied Mr. Halliburton. 'I never have felt downright well in it, and that's the truth. Well, I must see what can be done. Good evening.'

If the edict did not appear to be so irrevocably dark as that of Dr. Carrington, it was yet dark enough; and Mr. Halliburton, striving to look it full in the face, as he was in the habit of doing by less grave troubles, endeavoured to set himself to think 'what could be done.' There was no possible chance of keeping it from his wife: if it was really necessary that their place of residence should be changed, she must be taken into the counsel; and the sooner she was told the better. He went home, resolved to tell her before he slept.

The little troop departed, the children in bed, they sat together over the fire: though the weather had come in warm, a bit of evening fire was pleasant still. He sat nervous and fidgety. Now the moment had come, he shrunk from his task.

'Edgar, I am sure you are not well!' she exclaimed. 'I have observed it all the evening.'

'Yes, Jane, I am well. Pretty well, that is. The truth is, my darling, I have some bad news for you, and I don't like to tell it.'

Her own family were safe and well under her roof, and her fears flew to Francis, to Margaret, to Robert. Mr. Halliburton stopped her.

'It does not concern any of them, Jane. It is about myself.'

'But what can it be, about yourself?'

'They—will—not——Will you listen to the news with a brave heart?' he broke off to ask, with a smile, and the most cheering look he could call up to his face.

'Oh yes.' She smiled too. She thought it could be nothing very bad.

'They will not insure my life, Jane.'

Her heart stood still. 'But why?'

'They consider it too great a risk. They fancy I am not strong.'

A sudden flush of heat to her face; a moment's stillness; and then Jane Halliburton clasped her hands with a faint cry of despair. She saw that more remained behind.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUSPENSE.

Mrs. Halliburton sat in her chair, still enough, save for the wailing cry which had just escaped her lips. Her husband would not look at her in that moment. His gaze was bent on the fire, and his cheek lay in his hand. As she cried out, he stretched forth his other hand and let it fall lightly upon hers.

'Jane, had I thought you would look at the dark side of the picture, I should have hesitated to tell you. Why, my dear child, the very fact of my telling you at all, should convince you that there's nothing very serious the matter,' he added, in a cheering tone of reasoning. Now that he had spoken, he deemed it well to make the very best he could of it.

'You say they will *not* insure your life?'

'Well, Jane, perhaps that expression was not a correct one. They have not declined as yet to do so; but Dr. Carrington says he cannot give the necessary certificate that I am a thoroughly sound and healthy man.'

'Then you did go up to Dr. Carrington?'

'I did. Forgive me, Jane: I could not enter upon it before all the children.'

She leaned over and laid her head upon his shoulder. 'Tell me all about it, Edgar,' she whispered; 'as much as you know yourself.'

'I have told you the chief purport, Jane. I saw Dr. Carrington, and he asked me a great many questions, and examined me here'—touching his chest. 'He fancies the organs are not sound, and he declined giving the certificate.'

'That your chest is not sound?' asked Jane.

'He said the lungs.'

'Ah!' she uttered, with a sort of spasmodic gasp. 'What else did he say?'

'Well, he said nothing about the heart, or the liver, or any other vital part; so I conclude they are all right, and that there was nothing to say, replied Mr. Halliburton, attempting to be gay 'I could have told him my brain was strong enough, had he asked about that, for I'm sure it gets its full share of work. I need not have mentioned this to you at all, Jane, but for a perplexing bit of advice that the doctor gave me.'

Jane sat straight in her chair again, and looked at Mr. Halliburton. The colour was beginning to come into her face. He continued:—

'Dr. Carrington earnestly recommends that I

remove from London. Indeed—he said—that it was necessary—if I would get well. No wonder that you found my manner abstracted,' he continued very rapidly after his hesitation, 'with that unpalatable counsel to digest.'

'Did he think you very ill?' she breathed.

'He did not say I was "very ill," Jane. I am not very ill, as you may see for yourself. My dear, what he said was, that my lungs were—were——

'Diseased?' she put in.

'Diseased. Yes, that was it,' he truthfully replied. 'It is the term that medical men apply, when they wish to indicate unsoundness. And he strenuously recommended that I should quit London.'

'For how long? Did he say?'

'He said for good.'

Jane felt startled. 'How could it be done, Edgar?'

'In truth I do not know. If I leave London I leave my living behind me. Now you see why I was so absorbed at tea-time. When you saw me go out, I was going round to Allen's.'

"And what does *he* say?' she eagerly interrupted.

'Oh, he seems to think it a mere nothing, compared to Dr. Carrington. He agreed with him on one point—that I ought to live out of London.'

'Edgar, I will tell you what I think must be done,' said Jane, after a pause. 'I have not had time to reflect much upon it; but it strikes me that it would be advisable for you to see another physician, and take his opinion. Some man clever in affections of the lungs. Go to him to-morrow; without any delay. Should he say that you must leave London, of course we must leave it, no matter what the sacrifice.'

The advice corresponded with Mr. Halliburton's own opinion, and he resolved to follow it. A conviction, amounting to a certainty, was upon him, that, go to what doctor he might, the fiat would be the same as Dr. Carrington's. He did not say so to Jane. On the contrary, he spoke of these insurance-office physcians as being over-fastidious in the interests of the office; and he tried to deceive his own heart with the same sophistry.

'Shall you apply to another office to insure your life?' Jane asked.

'I would, if I thought it would not be useless.'

'You think it would be useless?'

The offices all keep their own physicians, and those physicians, it is my belief, are over-particular. Crotchety, I should call them, Jane.'

'I think it must amount to this,' said Jane: 'that if there is anything serious the matter with you, no office will be found to do it; but, if the

affection is only trifling or temporary, you may get yourself accepted.'

'That is about it. Oh, Jane!' he added, with an irrepressible burst of anguish, 'what would I not give to have insured my life before this came upon me! All those past years! they seem to have been let run to waste, when I might have been using them to lay up a store for the children!'

How many are there of us who, looking back, can feel that our past years, in some way or another, have *not* been let run to waste?

What a sleepless night that was for him! what a sleepless night for his wife! Both arose in the morning equally unrefreshed.

'To what physician will you go?' Jane inquired of him as she was dressing.

'I have been thinking of Dr. Arnold, of Finsbury,' he replied.

'Yes, you could not go to a better. Edgar, you will let me accompany you?'

'No, no, Jane. Your accompanying me would do no good. You could not go into the room with me.'

She saw the force of the objection. 'I shall be so very anxious,' she said, in a low tone.

He laughed at her: he was willing to make light of it if it might ease her fears. 'My dear, I will come home at once and report to you: I

will borrow Jack-the-Giant-Killer's seven-leagued boots, in the children's book of fairy tales, that I may get here the quicker.'

'You know that I *shall* be anxious,' she repeated, feeling vexed.

'Jane,' he said, his tone changing, 'I see that you are more anxious already than is good for you. It is not well that you should be so.'

'I wish I could be with you! I wish I could hear, as you will, Dr. Arnold's opinion from his own lips!' was all she answered.

'I will faithfully repeat it to you,' said Mr. Halliburton.

'Faithfully?—word for word? You will, on your honour?'

'Yes, Jane, I will. You have my promise. Good news I shall only be too glad to tell you; and, should it be the worst, it will be necessary that you should know it.'

'You must get there before ten o'clock,' she observed; 'otherwise there will be little chance of seeing him.'

'I shall be there by nine, Jane. To spare time later, would interfere too much with my day's work.'

A thought crossed Jane's mind—if the fiat were unfavourable, what would become of his day's work then—all his days?' But she did not speak it.

'Oh, papa,' cried Janey at breakfast, 'was it not a beautiful party! Did you *ever* enjoy yourself so much before?'

'I don't suppose you ever did, Janey,' he replied, in a kind tone.

'No, that I never did. Alice Harvey's birthday comes in summer, and she says she knows her mamma will let her give just such another. Mamma!'—turning round to Mrs. Halliburton.

'Well, Jane?'

'Shall you let me have a new frock for it? You know I tore mine last night.'

'All in good time, Janey. We don't know where we may all be then.'

No, they did not. The foreshadowing of it was already upon the spirit of Mrs. Halliburton. Not upon the children: they were spared it yet.

'Do not be surprised if you see me waiting for you when you come out of Dr. Arnold's,' said Jane to her husband, in a low tone, as he was going out.

'But, Jane, why? Indeed, I think it would be foolish of you to come. My dear, I never knew you like this before.'

Perhaps not. But when, before, had there been cause for this agitating apprehension?

Jane watched him depart. Indeed, calm as she contrived to remain outwardly, she was in a sadly

restless, nervous state; little accustomed, as she was, so to give way. A sick feeling of faintness was within her, a miserable sensation of apprehensive suspense; and she could hardly battle with it. You may have felt the same, in the dread approach of some great calamity. The reading over, Janey got her books about, as usual. Mrs. Halliburton took charge of her education in every branch, except music: for that, she had a master. She would not send Jane to school. The child reached her books; and was surprised at seeing her mother come into the room with her things on.

'Mamma! Are you going out?'

'For a little while, Jane.'

'Oh, let me go! let me go, too!'

'Not this morning, dear. You will have plenty of employment; preparing the lessons that you could not prepare last night.'

'So I shall,' said Janey. 'I thought perhaps you meant to excuse them, mamma.'

It was nearly *impossible* for Jane to remain in the house, in her present state of agitation. She knew that it did appear absurdly foolish to go after her husband; but, walk somewhere she must: how could she turn a different way from that which he had gone? It was a good distance to Finsbury: half-an-hour's walk at the least. Should

she go? or should she not? she asked herself as she went out of the house. She began to think that she might have remained at home, had she exercised proper self-control. She felt a great mind to turn back, and was slackening her pace to hesitating steps, when she caught sight of Mr. Allen at his surgery window.

An impulse came over her that she would go in and ask his opinion of her husband. She opened the door and entered. The surgeon was making up some pills.

'You are abroad betimes, Mrs. Halliburton!'

'Yes,' she replied. 'Mr. Halliburton has gone to Finsbury Square, to see Dr. Arnold, and I—— Do you think him very ill, Mr. Allen?' she abruptly broke off.

'I do not, myself. Carrington——Did you know he had been to Dr. Carrington?' asked Mr. Allen, almost fearing he might be betraying secrets.

'I know all about it. I know what the doctor said. Do you think Dr. Carrington was mistaken?'

'In a measure. There's no doubt the lungs are affected, but I believe not to the grave extent assumed by Dr. Carrington.'

'He assumed, then, that they were affected to a grave extent?' she hastily repeated, her heart beating faster.

'I thought you said you knew all about it, Mrs. Halliburton?'

'So I do. He may possibly not have told me the very worst said by Dr. Carrington; but he told me quite sufficient. Mr. Allen, *you* tell me—do you think that there is a chance of his recovery?'

'Most certainly I do,' warmly replied the surgeon. 'Every chance, Mrs. Halliburton. I see no reason whatever why he should not keep as well as he is now, and live for years, provided he takes care of himself. It appears that Dr. Carrington very strongly urged his removing into the country; he went so far as to say that it was his only chance for life—and, in that, I think, he went too far again. Not but what the country would do for him what London will not.'

'You deem that he ought to remove to the country?' she inquired, giving no token of the sinking terror those incautious words brought her —'his only chance for life.'

'I do. If it be possible for him to manage his affairs so as to get away, I should say, Let him do so by all means.'

'It *must* be done, you know, Mr. Allen, if it be essential.'

'In my judgment, it should be done. Many and many a time I have said to him myself, "It's

a pity but you could be away from this heavy London!" The fogs affect him, and the smoke affects him—the air altogether affects him: and I only wonder it has not told upon him before. As Dr. Carrington observed to him, there are some constitutions which somehow will not thrive here.'

Mrs. Halliburton rose with a sigh. 'I am glad you do not think so very ill of him,' she breathed.

'I do not think *ill* of him at all,' was the surgeon's answer. 'I confess that he is not strong, and that he must have care. The pure air of the country, and relaxation from some of his most pressing work, may do wonders for him. If I might advise, I should say, Let no considerations of pecuniary interest keep him here. And that is very disinterested advice, Mrs. Halliburton,' concluded the doctor, laughing, 'for, in losing you, I should lose both friends and patients.'

Jane went out. Those ominous words were still ringing in her ears—'his only chance for life.'

She put her self-control in force, and did *not* go to meet Mr. Halliburton. She returned home and took off her things, and gave what attention she could to Jane's lessons. But none can tell the suspense that was agitating her: the ever-restless glances she cast to the window, to see him pass. By-and-by she went and stood at it.

At last she saw him coming along in the dis-

tance. She would have liked to fly to meet him —to say, What is the news? but she did not. More patience, and then, when he came in at the front door, she quitted the room she was in, and went with him into the drawing-room, her face as white as a sheet.

He saw how agitatedly anxious she was, strive as she would for apparent calmness. He stood looking at her with a smile.

'Well, Jane, it is not so very formidable, after all.'

Her face grew hot, and her heart bounded on. 'What does Dr. Arnold say? You know, Edgar, you promised me the truth without disguise.'

'You shall have it, Jane. Dr. Arnold's opinion of me is not unfavourable. That the lungs are to a certain extent affected, is indisputable, and he thinks they have been so for some time. But he sees nothing to indicate present danger to life. He believes that I may make an old man yet.'

Jane breathed freely. A word of earnest thanks went up from her heart.

'With proper regimen—he has given me certain rules for living—and pure air and warm sunshine, he considers that I have really little to fear. I told you, Jane, those insurance doctors make the worst of things.'

'Dr. Arnold, then, recommends the country?'

observed Jane, paying no heed to the last remark.

'Very strongly. Nearly as strongly as Dr. Carrington.'

Jane lifted her eyes to her husband's face. 'Dr. Carrington said, you know, that it was your only chance for life.'

'Not quite as bad as that, Jane,' he returned, never supposing but he must himself have let the remark slip, and wondering how he came to do so. 'What Dr. Carrington said was, that it was London *versus* life.'

'It is the same thing, Edgar. And now, what is to be done? Of course we have no alternative; into the country we must go. The question is, where?'

'Ay, that is the question,' he answered. 'Not only where, but what to do? I cannot drop down into a fresh place, and expect a teaching connexion to surround me at once, all ready made, as if it had been waiting for me. But I have not time to talk now. Only fancy! it is half-past ten.'

Mr. Halliburton went out, and Jane remained, glued as it were to her chair. A hundred perplexing plans and schemes were already working in her brain.

CHAPTER IX.

LOOKING OUT FOR A HOME.

THE plans and schemes continued to work in Mrs. Halliburton's brain for days and days to come. Many and many an anxious consultation did she and her husband hold—where should they go? what should they do? That it was necessary to do something, and speedily, events proved, independent of what had been said by the doctors. Before another month had passed over his head, Mr. Halliburton had become so much worse that he had to resign his post at King's College. But, to the hopeful minds of himself and Jane, the country change was to bring its panacea for all ills. They had grown to anticipate it with enthusiasm.

His thoughts naturally ran upon teaching, as his continued occupation. He knew nothing of any other. All England was before him; and he supposed he might obtain a living at it, wherever he might go. Such testimonials, as his, were not met with every day. His cousin Julia was married to a gentleman of some local influence (as Mr. Halli-

burton had understood) in the city of which they were residents, the chief town of one of the midland counties; and a thought crossed his mind more than once, whether it might not be well to fix upon that same town to settle in.

'They might be able to recommend me, you see, Jane,' he observed to his wife, one evening that they were sitting together, after the children were in bed. 'Not that I should much like asking any favour of Julia.'

'Why not?' said Jane.

'Because she is not a pleasant person to ask a favour of: it is many years since I saw her, but I well remember that. Another reason why I feel inclined to that place is, that it is a cathedral town. Cathedral towns gather many of the higher order of the clergy in them; learning is sure to be respected, to find its weight there, should it do so nowhere else. Consequently there would be a field for classical teaching.'

Jane thought the argument had weight.

'And there's yet another thing,' continued Mr. Halliburton. 'You remember Peach?'

'Peach?—Peach?' repeated Jane, as if unable to recal the name.

'The young fellow that I had so much trouble with, a few years ago; drilling him between his terms at Oxford. But for me, he never would

have passed either his great or his little go. He did get plucked the first time he went up. You must remember him, Jane: he has often taken tea with us here.'

'Oh, yes, yes! I remember him now. Charley Peach.'

'Well, he has recently been appointed to a minor canonry in that same cathedral,' resumed Mr. Halliburton. Dr. Jacobs told me of it the other day. Now, I am quite sure that Peach would be delighted to say a word for me, or to put anything in my way. That is another reason why I am inclined to go there.'

'I suppose the town is a healthy one?'

'Ay, that it is; and it is seated in one of the most charming of our counties. There 'll be no London fogs or smoke there.'

'Then, Edgar, let us decide upon it.'

'Yes, I think so. Unless we should hear of an opening elsewhere that may promise better. We must get away by midsummer, if we can, or soon after it. It will be sharp work though.'

'What trouble it will be to pack the furniture!' she exclaimed.

'Pack what furniture, Jane? We must sell the furniture.'

'Sell the furniture!' she uttered, aghast.

'My dear, it would never do to take the furni-

ture. It would cost as much nearly as it is worth. There's no knowing, either, how long it might be upon the road, or the damage it might get. I expect it would have to go principally by water.'

'By water!' cried Mrs. Halliburton.

'I fancy so. By barge, I mean. The waggons would not take it, except by paying highly. A great deal of the heavy country traffic is done by water. This furniture is old, Jane, most of it, and will not bear the knocking about of rough travelling. Consider how many years your father and mother had it in use.'

'Then what should we do for furniture when we get there?' asked Jane.

'Buy new with the money we receive from the sale of this. I have been reflecting upon it a good deal, Jane, and I fancy it will be the best plan. However, if you hold by this old furniture, we must take it.'

Jane looked round upon it. She did hold by the time-used furniture; but she knew how old it was, and was willing to do whatever might be best. A vision came into her mind of fresh, clean, bright furniture, and it looked pleasant in the imaginary vista. 'It would certainly be a great deal to pack and carry,' she acknowledged. 'And some of it is not worth it.'

'And it would be more than we should want,'

resumed Mr. Halliburton. 'Wherever we go, we must be contented with a small house; at any rate, at first. But it will be time enough to go into these practical details, Jane, when we shall have fixed finally upon what is to be our destination.'

'Oh, Edgar! I shall be so sorry to take the boys from King's College.'

'Jane,' he said, a haggard sort of pain crossing his face as he spoke, 'there are so many things connected with it altogether that cause me sorrow, that my only resource is not to think upon them. I might be tempted to repine; to ask in a spirit of rebellion why this affliction should have come upon us. It is God's decree, and it is my duty to submit as patiently as I can.'

It was her duty also: and she knew it as she laid her hand upon her weary brow. A weary, weary brow from henceforth, that of Jane Halliburton!

CHAPTER X.

A DYING BED.

In a handsome chamber of a handsome house in Birmingham, an old man lay dying. He had been for most of his life engaged in extensive wholesale business; had achieved local position, had accumulated moderate wealth. But neither wealth nor position can ensure peace to a death-bed; and the old man lay on his, groaning over the past.

The season was that of mid-winter. Not the winter following the intended removal of Mr. Halliburton from London, as spoken of in the last chapter; but the winter preceding it, for it is necessary to take you back a little. A hard, sharp, white day in January: and the fire was piled up on high in the sick chamber, and the large flakes of snow piled themselves up outside on the frames of the windows, and beat against the panes of glass. The room was fitted up with every comfort that the most fastidious invalid could desire; and yet, I say, nothing seemed to bring comfort to the invalid lying there. His hands were clenching

themselves as in mortal agony; his eyes were apparently watching the falling of the curling snow. The eyes saw it not; in reality they were cast back to where his mind was—the past.

What could it be that was troubling him? Was it that loss of money, only two years ago, by which the one half of his savings had been engulfed. Scarcely. A man dying—as he knew he was—would be unlikely to cry over that now. Ample competence had remained to him, and he had neither son nor daughter to inherit. Hark! what is it that he is murmuring between his parched lips — to the accompaniment of his clenched hands?

'I see it all now; I see it all! While we are buoyed up with health and strength, we continue hard, selfish, obstinate in our wickedness. But when death comes, we awake to our error; and death has come to me, and I have awoke to mine. Why did I turn him out like a dog? He had neither kith nor kin, and I sent him adrift on the world, to fight with it, or to starve! He was the only child of my sister, and she was gone. She and I were of the same father and mother: we shared the same meals in childhood, the same home, the same play, the same hopes. She wrote to me when she was dying: as I am dying now. "Richard, should my poor boy be left fatherless—for my hus-

band's health seems to be failing—be you his kind friend and protector for Helen's sake, and may Heaven bless you for it!" And I scoffed at the injunction when the boy offended me, and turned him out. *Shall I have to answer for it?*'

The last anxious doubt was uttered more audibly than the rest; it escaped from his lips with a groan of pain. A woman who was dozing over the fire, started up.

'Did you call, master?'

'No. Go out and leave me.'

'But——'

'Go out and leave me,' he repeated, with an anger little fitted to his position. And the woman was speeding from the room, when he caught at the curtain, and called her back.

'Are they not come?'

'Not yet, sir. But, with this heavy fall, it's not to be wondered at. The highways must be almost impassable. With good roads they might have been here hours ago.'

She went out. He lay back on his pillow: his eyes wide open, but wearing the same dreamy look. You may be wondering who he is; though you probably guess, for you have heard of him once before as Mr. Cooper, the uncle who discarded Edgar Halliburton.

I must give you just a few words of retrospect.

Richard Cooper was the eldest of three children; the others were a brother and a sister: Richard, Alfred, and Helen. Alfred and Helen both married; Richard never did marry. It was somewhat singular that the brother and the sister should both die, each leaving an orphan; and that the orphans should find a home in the house of their uncle, Richard. Julia Cooper, the brother's orphan, was the first to come to it, a long while before Edgar Halliburton came. Helen had married the Rev. William Halliburton, and she died at his rectory in Devonshire—sending that earnest prayer to her brother Richard which you have just heard him utter. A little while, and her husband, the rector, was also dead; and then it was that Edgar went to his Uncle Richard's. Fortunate for these two orphan children, it appeared to be, that their uncle had not married; that he could give them a good home.

A good home he did give them. Julia left it first, to become the wife of Anthony Dare, a solicitor in extensive practice in a distant city. She married him very soon after her cousin Edgar came to his uncle's. And it was subsequent to the marriage of Julia, that Edgar was discarded and turned adrift. Years, many years, had gone by since then; and here lay Richard Cooper, stricken for death, and repenting of the harshness, which he

had not repented of, or sought to atone for, all through those long years. Ah, my friends! whatsoever there may lie upon our consciences, however we may have contrived to ignore it during our busy lives, be assured that it will find us out on our death-bed!

Richard Cooper lay back on his pillow, his eyes wide open with their inward tribulation. 'Who knows but there'd be time yet?' he suddenly murmured. And the thought appeared to excite his mind and flush his cheek, and he lifted his hand and grasped the bell-rope, ringing it so loudly as to bring two servants to the room.

'Go up, one of you, to Lawyer Weston's,' he uttered. 'Bring him back with you. Tell him I want to alter my will, and that there may be time yet. Don't send—one of *you* go,' he repeated in a tone of agonising entreaty. 'Bring him; bring him back!'

As the echo of his voice died away, there came a loud summons at the street door, as of a hasty arrival. 'Master,' cried one of the maids, 'they be come at last! I thought I heard a carriage, a drawing up amid the snow.'

'Who's come?' he asked in some confusion of mind. 'Weston's come?'

'Not him, sir: Mr. and Mrs. Dare,' replied the servant as she hurried out.

A lady and gentleman were getting out of a coach at the door. A tall man, very tall, with handsome features, but an unpleasantly free expression of countenance. The lady was tall also, stout and fair, with an imperious look in her little turned-up nose. 'Are we in time?' the latter asked of the servants.

'It's nearly as much as can be said, ma'am,' was the answer. 'But he has roused up in the last hour, and is growing excited. The doctors thought it might be so: that he'd not continue in the lethargy to the last.'

They went on at once to the sick chamber. Every sense of the dying man appeared to be on the alert. His hands were holding back the curtain, his eyes were strained on the room's entrance. 'Why have you been so long?' he cried in a voice of strength that they were surprised to hear.

'Dear uncle,' said Mrs. Dare, bending over the bed, and clasping the feeble hands, 'we started the very moment that the letter came. But we could not get along—the roads are dreadfully heavy.'

'Master,' whispered a servant in the invalid's ear, 'be we to go now for Lawyer Weston?'

'No, there's no need,' was the prompt answer. 'Anthony Dare, you are a lawyer,' continued Mr. Cooper; 'you'll do what I want done as well as another. Will you do it?'

'Anything you please, sir,' was Mr. Dare's reply.

'Sit you down, then; Julia, sit you down. You may be hungry and thirsty after your journey; but you must wait. The life's not ebbing out of you, as it is out of me. We'll get this matter over, that my mind may be so far at rest; and then you can eat and drink of the best that my house affords. I am in mortal pain, Anthony Dare.'

Mrs. Dare was silently removing some of her outer wrapperings, and whispering with the servant at the extremity of the roomy chamber; but Mr. Dare, who had taken off his great-coat and hat in the hall, continued to stand by the sick bed.

'I am sorry to hear it, sir,' he said, in reply to Mr. Cooper's concluding sentence. 'Can the medical men afford you no relief?'

'It is pain of mind, Anthony Dare, not pain of body. *That* pain has passed from me. I'd have sent for you and Julia before, but I did not think until yesterday that the end was so near. Never let a man be guilty of injustice!' broke forth Mr. Cooper, vehemently. 'Or let him know that it will come home to him to trouble his dying bed.'

'What can I do for you, sir?' questioned Mr. Dare.

'If you will open that bureau, you'll find pen

and ink and paper. Julia, come here: and see that we are alone.'

The servant left the room, and Mrs. Dare came forward, divested of her cloaks. She wore a handsome dark-blue satin dress (much the fashion at that time) with a good deal of rich white lace about it, a heavy gold chain, and some very showy jewellery of amethysts, set in gold. The jewellery was real, however, not sham; but altogether her attire looked somewhat out of place for a death-chamber.

The afternoon was drawing to a close. What with that and the thick atmosphere outside, the chamber had grown dim. Mr. Dare disposed the writing materials on a small round table at the invalid's elbow, and then looked towards the distant window.

'I fear I cannot see, sir, without a light.'

'Call for it, Julia,' said the invalid.

A lamp was brought, and placed on the table, so that its rays should not affect those eyes so soon to close to all earthly light. And Mr. Dare waited, pen in hand.

'I have been hard and wilful,' began Mr. Cooper, putting up his trembling hands. 'I have been obdurate, and selfish, and unjust; and now it is keeping peace from me——'

'But in what way, dear uncle?' softly put in Mrs.

Dare; and it may be as well remarked that whenever Mrs. Dare attempted to speak softly and kindly, it seemed to bear an unnatural sound to others' ears.

'In what way?—why, with regard to Edgar Halliburton,' said Mr. Cooper, the drops breaking out upon his brow. 'In seeking to follow the calling marked out for him by his father, he only did his duty; and I should have seen it in that light then, but for my own obstinate pride and self-will. I did wrong to discard him: I have done wrong, ever since, in keeping him from me, in refusing to be reconciled. Are you listening, Anthony Dare?'

'Certainly, sir. I hear.'

'Julia, I say that there was no reason for my turning him away. There has been no reason for my keeping him away. I have refused to be reconciled: I have sent back his letters unopened; I have held him at contemptuous defiance. When I heard that he had married, I cast harsh words to him, because he had not solicited my consent, though I was aware, all the while, that I had given him no opportunity to solicit it—that I had harshly refused all overtures, all intercourse. I cast harsh words to his wife, knowing her not. But I see my error now. Do you see it, Julia? Do you see it, Anthony Dare?'

'Would you like to have him sent for, sir?' suggested Mr. Dare.

'It is too late. He could not get here in time. I don't know, either, where he lives in London, or what his address may be. Do you?'—looking at his niece.

'Oh dear, no,' she replied, with a slightly contemptuous gesture of the shoulders. As much as to imply that to know the address of her cousin Edgar was quite beneath her.

'No, he could not get here,' repeated the dying man, whilst Mrs. Dare wiped the dews that had gathered on his pallid and wrinkled brow. 'Julia! Anthony! Anthony Dare!'

'Sir, what is it?'

'I wish you both to listen to me. I cannot die with this injustice unrepaired. I have made my will in Julia's favour. It is all left to her, save a few trifles to my servants. When the property comes to be realised, there'll be at least sixteen thousand pounds, and, but for that late mad speculation I entered into, there would have been nearer forty thousand.'

He paused. But neither Mr. nor Mrs. Dare answered.

'You are a lawyer, Anthony, and could draw up a fresh will. But there's no time, I say. What is darkening the room?' he abruptly broke off to ask.

Mr. Dare looked hastily up. Nothing was darkening the room, save the gradually increasing gloom of evening.

'My sight is growing dim, then,' said the invalid. 'Listen to me, both of you. I charge you, Anthony and Julia Dare, that you divide this money with Edgar Halliburton. Give him his full share; the half, even to a farthing. Will you do so, Anthony Dare?'

'Yes, I will, sir?'

'Be it so. I charge you both, solemnly—do not fail. If you would lay up peace for the time when you shall come to be where I am—do not fail. There's no time legally to do what is right, I feel that there is not. Ere the deed could be drawn up, I should be gone, and could not sign it. But I leave the charge upon you; the solemn charge. The half of my money belongs of right to Edgar Halliburton: Julia has only claim to the other half. Be careful how you divide it: you are sole executor, Anthony Dare. Have you got your paper ready?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Then just dot down a few words, as I dictate, and I will sign them. "I, Richard Cooper, do repent of my injustice to my dear nephew, Edgar Halliburton. And I do desire, by this my last act on my death-bed, to bequeath to him the half of

the money and property I shall die possessed of; and I charge Anthony Dare, the executor of my will, to carry out this act and wish as strictly as though it were a formal and legal one. I desire that whatever I shall die possessed of, save the bequests to my servants, may be equally divided between my nephew Edgar and my niece Julia."'

The dying man paused. 'I think that's all that need be said,' he observed. 'Have you finished writing it, Anthony Dare?'

Mr. Dare wrote fast and quickly, and was finishing the last words then. 'It is written, sir.'

'Read it.'

Mr. Dare proceeded to do so. Short as the time was which it took to accomplish this, the old man had fallen into a doze ere it was concluded; a doze or a partial stupor. They could not tell which it was; but, in leaning over him he woke up with a start.

'I can't die with this injustice unrepaired!' he cried, his memory evidently ignoring what had just been done. 'Anthony Dare, your wife has no right to all my money. I shall leave half of it to Edgar. I want you to write it down.'

'It is done, sir. This is the paper.'

'Where? where? Why don't you get a light in the room? It's pitch dark. This? Is this it?' —as Mr. Dare put it into his hand. 'Now, mind!'

he added, his tone changing to one of solemn enjoinder, 'mind you act upon it. Julia has no right to more than her half share; she must not take more: money kept by wrong, acquired by injustice, never prospers. It would not bring you good, it would not bring a blessing. Give Edgar his legal half; and give him his old uncle's love and contrition. Tell him if the past could come over again, there should be no estrangement between us.'

He lay panting for a few minutes, and then spoke again, the paper having fallen unnoticed from his hand.

'Julia, when you see Edgar's wife——Did I sign that paper?' he broke off.

'No, sir,' said Mr. Dare. 'Will you sign it now?'

'Ay. But, signed or not signed, you'll equally act upon it. I don't put it forth as a legal document; I suppose it would not, in this informal state, stand good in law. It is but a reminder to you, Anthony Dare, that you may not forget my wishes. Hold me up in bed, and have lights brought.'

Anthony Dare drew the curtain back, and the rays of the lamp flashed upon the dying man. Mr. Dare looked for a book, to put the paper on while it was signed.

'I want light,' came again from the bed, in a pleading tone. 'Julia, why don't you tell them to bring in the lamp?'

'The lamp is here, uncle. It is close to you.'

'Then there's no oil in it,' he cried. 'You have let the oil burn down. Julia I *will* have lights here. Tell them to bring the dinner lamps; they give the best light. Don't ring; go and see that they are brought.'

Unwilling to cross him, and doubting lest his sight should really have gone, Mrs. Dare went out, and returned with one of the servants and more light. Mr. Cooper was then lying back on his pillow, dozing and unconscious.

'Has he signed the paper?' Mrs. Dare whispered to her husband.

He shook his head in the negative, and pointed to it. It was lying on the bed, just as Mrs. Dare had left it. Mrs. Dare caught it up from any prying eyes that might be about, folded it, and held it securely in her hand.

'He will wake up again presently, and can sign it then,' observed Mr. Dare, just as a gentle ring was heard at the house door.

'It's the doctor,' said the servant; 'I know his ring.'

But the old man never did sign the paper, and never woke up again. He lay in a state of lethargy

throughout the night. Mr. and Mrs. Dare watched by his bed-side; the servants watched; and the doctors came in at intervals. But there was no change in his state; until the last great change. It occurred at day-break: and when the neighbours opened their windows to the cold and the snow, the house of Richard Cooper remained closed. Death was within it.

CHAPTER XI.

HELSTONLEIGH.

I BELIEVE that most of the numerous readers of my last story, 'The Channings'—and that they were very numerous I am happy to know—will not like this story the less, because its scene is laid in the same place, Helstonleigh. To those who feel inclined to raise a cabal, I can only answer that there was no help for it. There is no help for it in a double sense; for their caballing, or for my choosing Helstonleigh as the scene of this second story.

I relate to you, as you may have already discovered, a great deal of truth—of actual past events—combined and seasoned with fiction. I can only do this from my own personal experience, by taking you to the scenes and places where I have lived or been. But, save that the place named is the same, the stories are entirely separate and distinct.

It was necessary to mention this, lest, upon seeing the name, Helstonleigh, you should take

fright, and conclude that 'Mrs. Halliburton's Troubles' was a *réchauffée* of the old dish, 'The Channings,' served up again.

Not so. Of this same town of Helstonleigh I could relate to you volumes. No place in the world holds so green a spot in my memory. Do you remember the poem by Longfellow—the one he has entitled, 'My Lost Youth.'

"Often I think of the beautiful town,
That is seated by the sea;
Often in thought go up and down
The pleasant streets of that dear old town,
And my youth comes back to me.
And a verse of a Lapland song
Is haunting my memory still;
'A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.'

"I remember the gleams and glooms that dart
Across the schoolboy's brain;
The song and the silence in the heart,
That in part are prophecies, and in part
Are longings wild and vain.
And the voice of that fitful song
Sings on, and is never still:
'A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.'

"There are things of which I may not speak;
There are dreams that cannot die;
There are thoughts that make the strong heart weak,
And bring a pallor into the cheek,
And a mist before the eye.
And the words of that fatal song
Come over me like a chill:
'A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.'

"Strange to me now are the forms I meet
When I visit the dear old town;
But the native air is pure and sweet,
And the trees that o'ershadow each well-known street,
As they balance up and down,
Are singing the beautiful song,
Are sighing and whispering still:
'A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts.'

"And Deering's woods are fresh and fair,
And with joy that is almost pain
My heart goes back to wander there,
And among the dreams of the days that were
I find my lost youth again.
And the music of that old song
Throbs in my memory still:
'A boy's will is the wind's will,
And the thoughts of youth are long, long, thoughts.'"

Those are some of its verses. When I was requested, a short while back, to supply a motto for 'The Channings,' I gave two of them. What 'Deering' is to Longfellow, 'Helstonleigh' is to me.

The Birmingham stage-coach came into Helstonleigh one summer's night, and stopped at its destination, the Star-and-Garter Hotel, bringing with it some London passengers. The line of rail, direct to Helstonleigh from London, was not then opened; and this may serve to tell you how long it is ago. A lady and a little girl stepped from the inside of the coach, and a gentleman and three boys got down from the outside. The latter

were soaking. Almost immediately after quitting Birmingham, to which place the rail had conveyed them, the rain had commenced to pour in torrents, and those, outside, received full benefit of it. The coach was crammed, inside and out, but with the other passengers we have nothing to do. We have with these; they were the Halliburtons.

For the town which Mr. Halliburton had been desirous to remove to, the one in which his cousin, Mrs. Dare, resided, was no other than Helstonleigh.

Mrs. Halliburton drew a long face when she set eyes on her husband's condition. 'Edgar! you must be wet to the skin!'

'Yes, I am. There was no help for it.'

'You should have changed to the inside when I wanted you to do so,' she cried, in a voice of distress. 'You should indeed.'

'And have suffered you to take my place on the outside? Nonsense, Jane!'

Jane took a survey of the hotel. 'We had better remain here for the night. What do you think?'

'Yes, I think we had,' he replied. 'It is too wet to go about, looking after anything that might be less expensive. Inquire if we can have beds, Jane, while I see after the luggage.'

Mrs. Halliburton went in-doors, leading Janey,

and was confronted by the barmaid, a smart-speaking young woman in a smart cap. 'Can we sleep here to-night?' she inquired.

'Yes, certainly. How many beds?'

'I will go up-stairs with you and see,' said Mrs. Halliburton. 'Be so kind as not to put us in your more expensive rooms,' she added, in a lower tone.

The barmaid looked at her from top to toe, as it is much in the habit of barmaids to do, when such a request is preferred. She saw a lady in a black silk dress, a cashmere shawl, and a plain straw bonnet, trimmed with white. Simple as the attire was, quiet as was the demeanour, there was that about Mrs. Halliburton, in her voice, her accent, her bearing altogether, which proclaimed her the gentlewoman; and the barmaid condescended to be civil.

'I have nothing to do with the rooms,' she said; 'I'll call the chambermaid. My goodness me! You had better get them wet things off, sir, unless you'd be laid up with cold.'

The last words were uttered in surprise, as her eyes encountered Mr. Halliburton. He looked taller, and thinner, and handsomer than ever; but he had a hollow cough now, and his cheek was hectic, and the rain was dripping off him.

The chambermaid allotted them beds. Mr.

Halliburton, after rubbing himself dry with towels, for he was really wet to the skin, got into a warmed bed, and had some warm drink supplied to him. Jane, after unpacking what they should want for the night, returned to the sitting-room, where her children had been shown. A good-natured maid, seeing the boys' clothes were damp, had lighted a fire, and they were kneeling round it, having been provided with bread and butter, and milk and water. Intelligent, truthful, good-looking boys they were, with clear skins; bright, honest eyes; and open countenances. Janey had fallen asleep on a chair, her flaxen curls forming her a pillow on its elbow. The boys crowded to one side of the fire-place when their mother came in, leaving the best space for her; and William rose and reached her a chair. Mrs. Halliburton sat down in it, having laid on the table a Book of Common Prayer, which she had brought in her hand.

'Mamma, I hope papa will not be ill'!

'Oh, William, I do fear it. Such a dreadful wetting! And to be so long in it! How is it that he was so much worse than you?

'Because he sat at the end of the seat, and the gentleman next him did not hold the umbrella over him at all. When it came on to rain, some of the passengers had umbrellas and some had not,

so they were divided for the best. We three had one between us, and we were wedged in between two fat men, who helped to keep us dry. What a pity there was not a place for papa inside!'

'Yes; or if he would but have taken mine!' cried Mrs. Halliburton. 'A wetting would not have hurt me, as it may him. What place did they call that, William, where I got out to ask him to change?'

'Bromsgrove Lickey. Mamma, you have had no tea!'

'I do not feel to want any,' she sighed. Her's was a hopeful nature; but something within her, this evening, seemed to whisper of gloom and trial for the future. She turned to the table, where stood the remains of the children's meal, cut a piece of bread from the loaf, and slowly spread it with butter. Then she poured out a drop of milk.

'Dear mamma, do have some tea!' cried William; 'that's nothing but our milk and water.'

She shook her head and drank the milk. Tea would only be an additional expense, and she was too completely dispirited to care what she took.

'I will read now,' she said, taking up the Prayer Book. 'And afterwards, I think, you had better say your prayers here, where the fire is, as you have been so wet.'

She chose a short psalm, and read it aloud. Then the children knelt down, each at a separate chair, to say their prayers in silence. Not as children's prayers are sometimes hurried over, knelt they; but with lowly reverence, their heads bowed down, their young hearts lifted, never doubting but they were heard by God. They had been taught in a good school.

Did you ever have a sale of old things? Goods and chattels which, though they may have served your purpose, and looked well in their places, seem so old, when they come to be exhibited, that you feel half-ashamed of them? And as to the sum they realise—you will not have much trouble in hoarding it. Had Mr. Halliburton known the poor sum that would be the result of his sale; had Jane dreamt that they would go for an 'old song,' they had never consented to part with them. Better have been at the cost of carrying them to Helstonleigh. Their bedding, blankets, &c., they did take: and it was well they did.

I almost feel afraid to tell you how very little money they had in hand when they arrived, lest you should say, 'It cannot be true.' All their worldly wealth was little more than 120*l*. Debts had to be paid before leaving London; and it cost money to give up their house without notice, for their landlord was a strict one.

One hundred and twenty pounds! And with this they had to buy fresh furniture, and to live until teaching came. A forlorn prospect on which to re-commence the world! No wonder that Jane shunned tea at the large inn, or any other expense that might lessen the stock! But hope is buoyant in the human heart: and unless it were so, half the world might just lay themselves down to die.

Morning came: a bright, sunny, beautiful morning after the rain. Not, apparently, had Mr. Halliburton suffered. His limbs felt a little stiff, but that would go off before the day closed. Their plans were to take a small house, as cheap a one as they could get, consistent with—you really must for once excuse the word—gentility. That—a tolerable fair appearance—was in a degree necessary to Mr. Halliburton's success as a teacher.

'A healthy, dry spot, a little way out of the town,' mused the landlord of the 'Star,' to whom they communicated their desire. 'The London Road would be the place, then. And you probably will find there such a house as you mention.'

They took their way to the London Road, being directed to it,—a healthy suburb of the town; and there they did find a house that they thought might suit them: a semi-detached house of good

appearance, inclosed by iron railings, and standing a little back from the road. A sitting-room was on either side of the entrance, the kitchen being at the back. Three bed-chambers were above; and above the chambers an open garret. I don't mean open to the sky, you know; that would be rather too airy; but open to the stairs, and to the inside rafters of the roof. A small garden was at the back; and beyond it was a field, which did not belong to the house. The adjoining house was similar to this; but that possessed a large and productive garden. An inmate of that house showed them over this. She was dressed as a Quakeress. Her features were plain, but her complexion was fair and delicate, and she had calm blue eyes.

'The rent of the house is thirty-two pounds per annum,' she said, in reply to Mrs. Halliburton's question. 'It belongs to Thomas Ashley; but thee must not apply to him. I will furnish thee with the address of the agent, who has the letting of Friend Ashley's houses. It is Anthony Dare. You will find the house pleasant and healthy, if you decide upon it,' she added, speaking to them both.

The latter name had struck on the ear of Mr. Halliburton. 'Jane!' he whispered to his wife, 'that must be the gentleman who married my

cousin, Julia Cooper. His name was Anthony Dare.'

Mr. Halliburton proceeded alone to the office of Mr. Dare, the gentleman you met at Mr. Cooper's; Mrs. Halliburton returning to her children at the hotel. They had decided to take the house. Mr. Dare was not at home. 'In London, with his wife,' the head clerk said. But the clerk had power to let the house. Mr. Halliburton gave him some particulars with regard to himself, and they were deemed satisfactory; but he did not mention that he was related to Mrs. Dare.

The next thing was about furniture. The clerk directed Mr. Halliburton to a warehouse, where both new and second-hand might be obtained, and he proceeded to it, calling in at the 'Star' for his wife. She knew a great deal more about furniture than he. They did the best they could, spending about fifty pounds. A Kidderminster carpet was bought for the best sitting-room. The other room, which was to be Mr. Halliburton's study, and the bed-rooms, went for the present without. 'We will buy all those things when we get on a bit,' said Mr. Halliburton.

CHAPTER XII.

ANNA LYNN.

THEY slept that night again at the Star, and the following morning early, they and their furniture took possession together. A busy day it was, arranging things. Jane—who had determined, as the saying runs, 'to put her shoulder to the wheel,' not only on this day, but on the future days—did not intend to engage a regular servant. That, like the carpets, might be indulged in as they got on; but, meanwhile, she thought, a young girl might be found who would come in for a few hours daily, and do what they wanted done.

In the course of the morning, the fair, pleasant face of the Quakeress was seen approaching the back door, from the garden. She wore a lilac print gown, a net kerchief crossed under it on her neck, and the peculiar net cap, with its high caul and neat little border.

'I have stepped in to ask if I can help thee with thy work,' she began. 'Thee has plenty to

do, setting straight the things, and thy husband does not look strong. I will aid if thee pleasest.'

'You are very kind, to be so thoughtful for a stranger,' replied Jane, charmed with the straightforward frankness of the Quakeress. 'I hope you will first tell me to whom I am obliged.'

'Thee can call me Patience,' was the ready reply. 'I live next door, with Samuel Lynn and his daughter Anna. His wife died soon after the child was born. I was related to Anna Lynn; and when she was departing she sent for me, and begged me not to leave her child, unless Samuel should take unto himself another wife. But that appears to be far from his thoughts. He loves the child much; she is as the apple of his eye.

'Is Mr. Lynn in business?' asked Jane.

'Not on his own account now. He was a glove manufacturer, as a young man, but he had not a large capital; and when the British ports were opened for the admission of gloves from the French, it ruined him—as it did many others in the city. Only the rich masters could stand that. Numbers went then.'

'Went!' echoed Jane. 'Went where?'

'To ruin. Ah! I remember it: though it is a long while ago now. It was, I think, in the year 1825. I cannot describe to thee the distress and

destruction it brought upon this city, till then so flourishing. The manufacturers had to close their works, and the men went about the streets, starving.'

'Did the distress continue long?'

'For weeks, and months, and years. The town will never be again, in that respect, what it has been. Samuel Lynn was a man of integrity, and he gave up business while he could pay everybody, and accepted the post of manager in the manufactory of Thomas Ashley. Thomas Ashley is one of the first manufacturers in the city, as his father was before him. When thee shall know the place and the people better, thee will find that there is not a name more respected throughout Helstonleigh, than that of Thomas Ashley.'

'I suppose he is a rich man?'

'Yes, he is a rich man,' replied Patience, who was as busy with her hands as she was with her tongue. 'His household is an expensive one, and he keeps his open and his close carriage; but, for all that, he must be putting by money. It is not for his riches that Thomas Ashley is respected, but for his high character. There is not a juster man living, than Thomas Ashley; there is not a manufacturer in the town who is so considerate and kind to his workmen. His rate of wages is on the highest scale, and he is incapable of oppression.

He has a son and daughter. He, the boy, causes him much uneasiness and expense.'

'Is he—is he not steady?' hastily asked Jane.

'Bless thee, it is not that!' was the laughing answer of Patience. 'He is but a young boy yet. When he was fourteen months old, the nurse let him fall out of her arms, from the first landing to the hall below. At first they thought he was not hurt: Margaret Ashley herself thought it; the doctors thought it. But in a little time the injury grew apparent. It lay in one of the hips; he is often in great pain, and he will be lame for life. Abscess after abscess forms in the hip. They take him to the sea-side; to the doctors in London; but nothing cures. A beautiful boy in the face, as you ever saw; but his hurt renders him peevish. He is fond of books; and David Byrne, who is a clever Latin and Greek scholar, goes daily to instruct him: but the boy is thrown back by his fits of illness. It is a great grief to Thomas and Margaret Ashley. They——Why, Anna, is it thee? What dost thee do here?'

Mrs. Halliburton turned round from the kitchen cupboard, where she and Patience were arranging crockery, to behold a little girl, who was no doubt Anna Lynn. Dark blue eyes were deeply set beneath their long lashes, which lay on a damask and dimpled cheek; her pretty teeth, like pearls,

shone between her smiling lips, and her chestnut hair fell in a mass of careless curls upon her neck. Never, Mrs. Halliburton thought, had she seen a face so lovely. Jane was a pretty child; but Jane faded into nothing, in comparison with that vision, standing there.

'Thee has got thy cap off again, Anna!' cried the Quakeress, with some asperity of tone. 'Art thee not ashamed to be so bold?—going about with thy head uncovered!'

'The cap came off, Patience,' gently responded Anna. She had a sweetly timid manner; a modest expression of face.

'Thee need not tell me what is untrue. When the cap is tied on, it will not come off, unless removed purposely. Go home, and put it on. Thee may come back again. Perhaps Friend Halliburton will permit thee to stay awhile with her children, who are arranging their books so orderly in the study. Is thy French lesson learnt?'

'Not quite,' replied Anna, running away.

She came back with a pretty little white net cap on, the very model of that, worn by Patience. All her luxuriant curls were pushed under it, and the crimped border was resting on the fair forehead.

'Nay, there is no call to put all thy hair out of

sight, like that, child,' said Patience. 'Where are thy combs?'

'In my hair, Patience.'

Patience took off the cap, formed two flat curls by means of the combs, on either side the temples, put the cap on again, and tucked the rest of the hair smoothly underneath it. Mrs. Halliburton then took Anna's hand, and led her to her own children.

'What a pity it is to hide her hair!' she said afterwards to Patience.

'Dost thee think so? It is the custom with our people. Anna's hair is fine, and of a curly nature. Brush it as I will, it curls; and she has acquired a habit of taking her cap off when I am not watching. Her father, I grieve to say, will let her sit by the hour together, her hair curling down, as thee saw it now, and her cap anywhere. I believe he thinks nothing she does is wrong. I talk to him much.'

'I never saw a more beautiful child!' said Jane, warmly.

'I grant thee that she is fair; but she is eleven years old now, and her vanity should be checked. She is sometimes invited to the Ashleys, where she sees the mode in which Mary Ashley is dressed, according to the fashion of the world, and it sets her longing. Samuel Lynn will not listen to me.

He is pleased that his child should be received there as Mary Ashley's equal; he cannot forget the time when he was in a good position himself.'

'Who teaches Anna?'

'She attends a small school for Friends, kept by Ruth Darby. It is the holidays now. Her father educates her well. She learns French and drawing, and other branches of learning suitable for girls. Take care! let me help thee with that heavy table.'

Presently they went to see how things were getting on in the study. Jane could not keep her eyes off the face of that lovely child. It partially hindered her work, which there was little need of, on that busy day; a day so busy that they were all glad when it was over, and they might be at liberty to retire to rest.

Rarely had Jane witnessed so magnificent a view as that which burst upon her sight the following morning, when she drew up her window blind. The previous day was hazy—nothing to be seen; now the atmosphere was clear. The vast extent of scenery spread out around, the green fields near, the growing corn, the sparkling rivulets, the woods with their darker and their brighter trees, the undulating slopes—all were charming to look upon. But beyond all, and far more charming, bounding the landscape in the distant horizon,

stretched the long chain of the far-famed Malvern hills. As the sun cast upon them its light and its shade, bringing out the brightness of their varied colours—blue, green, brown, grey—their raised outline so clearly depicted against the sky, and their dazzling white villas peeping out from the trees at their base—Jane felt that she could have gazed for ever. A wondrously fine picture is that of Malvern, as seen from Helstonleigh in the freshness of the early morning.

'Edgar!' she impulsively exclaimed, turning to the bed—for Mr. Halliburton had not risen—'you never saw anything more beautiful than the view from this window. I am sure half the Londoners never dreamt of such.'

There was no reply. 'Perhaps he may be yet asleep,' she thought. But, upon going near the bed, she saw his eyes were open.

'Jane,' he gasped, 'I am ill.'

'Ill!' she repeated, a spasm darting through her heart.

'Every limb is paining me. My head is aching, and I am burning with fever. I have felt it coming on all night.'

She bent down; she felt his hands and his hot face—all burning, as he said, with fever.

'We must call in a doctor,' she quietly said, suppressing every sign of dismay, that it might

not agitate him. 'I will ask Patience to recommend one.'

'Yes; better have a doctor at once. What will become of us? If I should be going to have an illness——'

'Stay, Edgar; do not give way to dark anticipations,' she gently said. 'A brave mind, you know, goes half way towards a cure. It is the effect of that wetting; the cold must have been smouldering within you.'

Smouldering only to burst out the fiercer for its delay. Patience spoke in favour of their own medical man, a Mr. Parry, who lived near, and had a large practice. He came; and pronounced the malady to be rheumatic fever.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FEVER.

For nine weeks Mr. Halliburton never left his bed. His wife was worn to a shadow; what with waiting on him, and battling with her anxiety. Her body was weary, her heart was sick. Do *you* know the expense of illness? Jane knew it then.

In two weeks more, he could leave his easy chair and crawl about the room; and by that time he was all eagerness to commence his operations for the future.

'I must get some cards printed, Jane,' he cried, one morning. '"Mr. Halliburton, Professor of the Classics and Mathematics, late of King's Col." —or should it be simply "Edgar Halliburton?"' he broke off, to deliberate. 'I wonder what the custom may be, down here?'

'I think you should wait until you are stronger, before you print your cards,' was Jane's reply.

'But I can be getting things in train, Jane. I have been—how many weeks is it now?'

'Eleven.'

'To be sure. It was June when we came; it

is now September. I have been obliged to neglect the boys' lessons, too! Oh, dear!'

'They have been very good, very quiet; they have gone on with their lessons themselves. If we have trouble in other ways, we have a blessing in our children, Edgar. They are thoroughly loving and dutiful.'

'I don't know the ordinary terms of the locality,' he resumed, after an interval of silence. 'And—I wonder if people will want references? Jane'—after another silence—'you must put your things on, and go to Mrs. Dare's.'

'To Mrs. Dare's!' she echoed. 'Now? I don't know her.'

'Never mind about not knowing her,' he eagerly continued. 'She is my own cousin. You must ask whether they will allow themselves to be referred to. Peach will allow it also, I am quite certain. Do go, Jane.'

Invalids, in the weak state of Mr. Halliburton, are apt to be restlessly impatient, when the mind is set upon any project or plan. Jane found that it would cross him much if she declined to go to Mrs. Dare, and she made ready for the visit. Patience directed her to their residence.

It was situated at the opposite end of Helstonleigh. A handsome residence, inclosed by a high wall, and bearing the imposing title of 'Pomera-

nian Knoll.' Jane entered the iron gates, walked round the carriage drive that inclosed the lawn, and rang at the house bell. A showy footman in light blue, with a bunch of tags on his shoulder the size of a summer cabbage, answered it.

'Can I see Mrs. Dare?'

'What name, ma'am?'

Jane gave in one of her visiting cards, wondering whether that was not too grand a proceeding, considering the errand upon which she had come. She was shown into an elegant room, to the presence of Mrs. Dare. That lady was in expensive morning dress, with chains, and rings, and bracelets, and other glittering jewellery about her: like she had worn the evening you saw her beside Mr. Cooper's death-bed.

'Mrs. Halliburton?' she was repeating in doubt, when Jane entered, her eyes strained on the card. 'What Mrs. Halliburton?' she added, not very civilly, turning her eyes upon Jane.

Jane explained. The wife of Edgar Halliburton, Mrs. Dare's cousin.

Mrs. Dare's presence of mind wholly forsook her. She grew ghastly white; she caught at a chair for support; she was utterly unable to speak, or to conceal her agitation. Jane could only look at her in amazement, wondering whether she was seized with sudden illness.

A few moments, and she recovered herself. She took a seat, motioned Jane to another, and asked, like she might have asked of any stranger, what her business might be. Jane explained it, somewhat at length.

Mrs. Dare's surprise was great. She could not, or would not, understand; and her face flushed a deep red, and again grew deadly pale. 'Edgar Halliburton come to Helstonleigh to live!' she repeated. 'And you say you are his wife?'

'I am his wife,' was the reply of Jane, spoken with quiet dignity.

'*What* is it that you say he has in view, in coming here?'

'I beg your pardon; I thought I had explained.' And Jane went over the ground again—why he had been obliged to leave London, and his reasons for settling in Helstonleigh.

'You could not have come to a worse place,' said Mrs. Dare, who appeared to be annoyed almost beyond repression. 'Masters of all sorts are so plentiful here that they tread on each other's heels.'

Discouraging news! And Jane's heart beat fast on hearing it. 'My husband thought you and Mr. Dare would kindly interest yourselves for him. He knows that Mr. Peach will——'

'No,' interrupted Mrs. Dare, in a decisive tone.

'For Edgar Halliburton's own sake I must decline to recommend him; or, indeed, to interfere at all. It would only hold out fallacious hopes. Masters are here in abundance—I speak of private masters; they don't get half enough to do. Schools are also plentiful. The best thing will be to go to some place where there is a more favourable opening, and not to settle himself here at all!'

'But we have already settled here,' replied Jane.

A thought suddenly struck Mrs. Dare. 'It can never be Edgar who has taken Mr. Ashley's cottage in the London Road? I remember the name was said to be Halliburton.'

'The same. It was let to us by Mr. Dare's clerk.'

Mrs. Dare sat biting her lips. That she was grievously annoyed was evident; but, in deference to good manners, which were partially returning to her, she strove to repress its signs. 'I presume your husband is poor, Mrs. Halliburton?'

'We are very poor.'

'It is generally the case with teachers: as I have observed. Well, I can only give one answer to your application—that we must decline all interference. I hope Edgar will not think of applying again to us upon the subject.'

Jane rose. Mrs. Dare remained seated. And yet she prided herself upon her good breeding!

'I had forgotten a question which my husband particularly desired me to ask,' Jane said, turning back, for she was moving to the door. 'Edgar saw by the papers that his uncle, Mr. Cooper, died the beginning of the year. Did he remember him on his death-bed, so far as to send a message of reconciliation?'

Strange to say, the countenance of Mrs. Dare again changed: now to a burning heat, now to a livid paleness. She hesitated in her answer.

'Yes,' she said at length. 'Mr. Cooper so far relented as to send him his forgiveness. "Tell my nephew Edgar, if you ever see him, that I am sorry for my harshness; that I would treat him differently, were the time to come over again." I do not remember the precise words; but they were to that effect. There is no doubt that he would have wished to be reconciled: but time did not allow it. I should have written Edgar word of this, had I been acquainted with his address.'

'A letter addressed to King's College would always have found him. But he will be glad to hear this. He also bade me ask how Mr. Cooper's money was left—if you would kindly give him the information.'

Mrs. Dare bent her head. She was busy playing with her bracelet. 'The will was proved in

Doctors' Commons. Edgar Halliburton may see it by paying a shilling there.'

It was not a gracious answer, and Jane paused. 'He cannot go to Doctors' Commons; he is not in London,' she gently said.

Mrs. Dare raised her head. A look, speaking plainly of defiance, had settled itself on her features. 'It was left to me; the whole of it, save a few trifling legacies to his servants. What could Edgar Halliburton expect?'

'I am sure that he did not expect anything,' observed Jane. 'Though I believe a hope has sometimes crossed his mind, that Mr. Cooper might at the last relent, and remember him.'

'Nay,' said Mrs. Dare, 'he had behaved too disobediently for that. First, in opposing his uncle's wishes that he should enter into business; secondly, in his marriage.'

'In his marriage!' echoed Jane, a flush rising to her own face.

'It was so. Mr. Cooper was exceedingly exasperated when he heard that Edgar had married. He looked upon the marriage, I believe, as an undesirable one for him in a pecuniary point of view. You must pardon my speaking of this to you personally. You appear to wish for the truth.'

The flush on Jane's face deepened to crimson. 'It is true that I had no money,' she said. 'But

I am the daughter of a clergyman, and was reared a gentlewoman!'

'I suppose my uncle thought Edgar Halliburton should have married a fortune. However, all that is past and gone, and it will do no good to recal it. I am sorry that you should have been so ill-advised for your own interests as to fix on this place to come to.'

Mrs. Dare rose. She had sat all this while; Jane had stood. 'Tell Edgar, from me, that I am sorry to hear of his illness. Tell him that there is no possible chance of success for him in Helstonleigh; no opening whatever! When I say that I hope he will speedily remove to some place less over-done with private teachers, I speak only in his own interest!'

She rang the bell as she spoke, and gave Jane the tips of two of her fingers. The footman held open the hall door, and bowed her out. Jane went down the gravel sweep, fully determined never again to trouble Mrs. Dare.

'Joseph!' cried Mrs. Dare, sharply.

'Ma'am?'

'Should that lady ever call again, I am not at home, remember!'

'Very well, ma'am,' was the man's reply.

Mrs. Dare did not stay to hear it. She had flown upstairs to her room in trepidation. There

she attired herself hastily, and went out, bending her steps towards Mr. Dare's office. It was situated at that end of the town; and the door displayed a brass plate: 'Mr. Dare, Solicitor.'

Mrs. Dare entered the outer room. 'Is Mr. Dare alone?' she asked of the clerks.

'No, ma'am. Mr. Ashley is with him.'

Chafing at the answer, for she was in a mood of sad impatience, of inward tremor, Mrs. Dare waited for a few minutes. Mr. Ashley came out. A man of nearly forty years, rather above the middle height, with a fresh complexion, dark eyes, and well-formed features. A benevolent-looking, good man. His wife was a cousin of Mr. Dare's.

Mr. Dare was seated at his table in his own room when his wife came in. She had turned again of an ashy paleness, and she dropped down on a chair near to him.

'What is the matter?' he asked in astonishment. 'Are you ill?'

'I think I shall die,' she gasped. 'I have had a mortal fright, Anthony.'

Mr. Dare rose. He was about to get her some water, or to call for it, but she caught his arm. 'Stay, and hear me! Stay! Anthony, those Halliburtons have come to Helstonleigh. Come to live here!'

Mr. Dare's mouth opened of itself. 'What Halliburtons?' he presently asked.

'*They*. He has come here to settle. He wants to teach; and his wife has been with me, asking us to be referees. Of course I put the stopper upon that. The idea of *our* having poor relations in the town, who get their living by teaching!'

A very disagreeable idea indeed; for those who were playing first fiddle in the town, and who looked to play it still. But, not for that did the man and wife stand gazing at each other; and the naturally free, bold look on Mr. Dare's face had faded considerably just then.

'She asked about the will,' said Mrs. Dare, dropping her voice to a whisper, and looking round with a shiver. 'I thought I should have died with fear.'

Mr. Dare rallied his courage. Any little reminiscence, that may have momentarily disturbed his equanimity, he shook off, and was his own bold self again.

'Nonsense, Julia! What is there to fear? The will is proved and acted upon. Whatever the old man may have uttered to us, in his death ramblings, was heard by ourselves alone. If anybody *had* heard it, I should not much care. A will's a will all the world over; and, to act against it, would be illegal.'

Mrs. Dare sat wiping her brow, and gathering up *her* courage. It came back by slow degrees.

'Anthony, we must get them out of Helstonleigh. For more reasons than one, we must get them out. They are in that house of Mr. Ashley's.'

He looked surprised. 'They! Ay, to be sure: the name in the books is Halliburton. It never occurred to me that it could be they. I wonder if they are poor?'

'Very poor,' the wife said.

'Just so,' said Mr. Dare, with a pleasant smile. 'I'll not ask for the rent this quarter, but let it go on a bit. We may get them out, Mrs. Dare.'

You need not be told that Anthony Dare and his wife had omitted to act upon Mr. Cooper's dying injunction. At the time, they did really intend to fulfil it; they were not thieves or forgers. But Edgar Halliburton was not present to remind them of his claims; and, when the money came to be realised, to be in their own hands, there it was suffered to remain. Waiting for him, of course; they did not know precisely where to find him and did not take any trouble to inquire. Very tempting and useful found they the money. A great portion of their own share went in paying back debts, for they lived at a high rate of expenditure; and—and in short they had intrenched

upon that other share, and could not now have paid it over, had their will been ever so good. No wonder that Mrs. Dare had felt like one in mortal fear, when she met Jane Halliburton face to face!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CHRISTMAS DREAM.

WINTER had come to Helstonleigh: frost hovered in the air and rested on the ground. How was Mr. Halliburton? He had never once been out since his illness, and he sat by the fire when he did not lie in bed, and his cough was racking him. He might, and probably would, have recovered health under more favourable auspices, but his anxiety of mind was killing him. Their money was dwindling to a close; and strengthening delicacies they dared not get. Mr. Halliburton would say he did not require them; that he could not eat them if they were procured. Poor man! he craved for them in his inmost heart. Strange to say, he did not see his own danger. Or, rather, it would have been strange, but that similar cases are met with every day. 'When this cold weather shall have passed, and spring is in, then I shall get my strength up,' was his constant cry. 'Then I shall set about my work in earnest, and make my arrival and my plans known to Mr. Peach. It

has been of no use bothering him beforehand.' False, false hopes! fond, delusive, mocking hopes!

Dr. Carrington had said that if he *took care* of himself, he might live and be well. The other doctors had said the same. And there was no cause to doubt their judgment. But they had not bargained for a long attack of rheumatic fever, or for the increased injury to the lungs which the same cause, the wetting, had induced.

On Christmas-eve, he and Jane were sitting round the fire in the twilight. He could come down stairs; indeed, he did not appear to be so ill as he really was. The surgeon who attended him in the fever had been discharged long ago. 'There's nothing the matter with me now but debility; and, only time will get me over that,' Mr. Halliburton said when he dismissed him. Jane was hopeful, more hopeful by fits and starts than continuously so; but she did really believe that he might get well when the winter had passed. They were sitting over the fire, when a great bustle interrupted them. All the children trooped in at once, with the commotion and noise that it is the delight of children not to stir without. Frank, who had been out, had entered the house with his arms full of holly and ivy, his bright face glowing with excitement. The others were attending him, to show off the prize.

'Look at this lot of Christmas, mamma! cried he. 'I have bought it.'

'Bought it?' repeated Jane. 'My dear Frank, did I not tell you we must do without Christmas this year?'

'But it cost nothing, mamma. Only a penny!'

Jane sighed. She did not say to the children that even a penny was no longer 'nothing.'

'You know that penny I have kept in my pocket a long while,' went on Frank in excitement, addressing the assemblage collectively. 'Well, I thought if mamma would not buy some Christmas, I would.'

'But you did not get all that for a penny, Frank? We should pay sixpence for it in London.'

'I did, though, mamma. I got it of that old man who lives in the cottage higher up the road, with the big garden to it. He was going to cut me more, but I told him this was plenty. You should have seen the heaps he gave a woman for twopence: she wanted a wheelbarrow to carry it away.'

Janey clapped her hands, and began a dance on one leg. 'I shall help to dress the rooms! We must have a merry Christmas!'

Mr. Halliburton drew her to him. 'Yes, we must have a merry Christmas, must we not, Janey? Jane"—turning to his wife—'can you

manage to get a bit of nice dinner for us? Christmas only comes once a year.'

He looked up with his haggard face: very much as though he were longing for the nice dinner then.

'I will see what I can do,' said Jane in reply, smothering down another sigh. 'I am going out presently to the butcher's. A bit of beef will be the best to buy; and the pudding's a plain one, but I hope it will be nice. Yes, we must keep Christmas.'

Christmas-day dawned, and in due time they assembled as usual. Jane intended to go to church that day. During her husband's illness, she had been obliged to send the children alone. They had been trained to know what church meant, and did not require somebody with them to keep them in order there. A good thing if the same could be said of all children!

It was a clear, bright morning, cold and frosty. Mr. Halliburton came down just as they were starting.

'I feel so much better to-day!' he exclaimed. 'I could almost go with you myself. Jane'—smiling at her look of consternation—'you need not be startled: I do not intend to attempt it. William, you are not ready.'

'Mamma said I was to stay with you, papa.'

'Stay with me! There's not the least necessity for that. I tell you all I am feeling better to-day —well. You can go with the rest, William.'

William looked at his mother; and, for a moment, Jane hesitated. Only for a moment. 'I would rather he stayed, Edgar,' she said. 'Betsy will be gone by twelve o'clock. Indeed, I should not feel comfortable at the thought of your being alone.'

'Oh, very well,' replied Mr. Halliburton, quite gaily. 'I suppose you must stay, William, or we shall have mamma leaving when the service is only half over, to see whether I have not fallen into the fire.'

Jane had all the household care upon her shoulders now, and a great portion of the household work. Though an active domestic manager, she had known nothing practically of the more menial work of a house: she knew it only too well now. The old saying is a very true one: 'Necessity makes us acquainted with strange bedfellows.' This young girl, Betsy, who came in part of each day to assist, was almost as much plague as profit. She had said to Jane on Christmas-eve: 'If you please, mother says I am to be at home to-morrow, if it's convenient.' I am! However, Jane and the young lady came to a compromise. She was to go home at twelve, and come back later to

wash the dishes. Of course it entailed upon Jane all the trouble of the dinner.

Have you ever known one of these cases yourself? Where a lady—a lady, mind you, and it is what Jane was—has had to put away her habits of refinement, and pin up her gown round her, and turn to, and cook; roast meat, boil potatoes; do all the other hundred and one items essential to serve a dinner? There's many a one doing it now in real life. Jane Halliburton was not a solitary example. The pudding had been made the day before, and partially boiled: it was now on, boiling again, and the rest of the dinner she would do on her return from church.

It was something wonderful, the improvement in Mr. Halliburton's health that day. He took his part with William in reading the psalms and lessons while the rest were at church: it was what he had been unable to do for a long while, in consequence of his cough and his laboured breathing. The duty over, he lay back in his chair; in thought apparently, not in exhaustion.

'Peace on earth, and good will towards men!' he repeated presently, in a fervent, but somewhat abstracted tone. 'William, my boy, I think peace must be coming to me at last. I do feel so well.'

'What peace, papa?' asked William, puzzled.

'The peace of renewed health, of hope, the free-

dom from—from worry. The Christmas season and the bright day have taken away all my despondency. Let me go on like this, and in another month I shall be out and at work.'

William's eyes sparkled. He fully believed. Boys are sanguine.

The dinner was to be at three o'clock, and Jane did her best to get it ready. During the process, Patience appeared at the back door with a plate of fine oranges. 'Will thee accept of these for thy children?' asked she.

'How kind you are!' exclaimed Jane, in an impulse of grateful feeling, as she thought of her children. Of such little treats they had latterly enjoyed but a scanty share. 'Patience, I hope you did not buy them purposely?'

'Had I had to buy them, thee would not have seen them,' returned the candid Quakeress. 'A friend of Samuel Lynn's, who lives at Bristol, sends us a small case every winter. When I was unpacking it this morning I said to him, "The young ones at the next door would be pleased at a few of these;" but he did not answer. Thee must not think him selfish: he is not a selfish man; but he cannot bear to see anything go beside the child. Anna looked at him eagerly: she would have been pleased to send half the box: and he saw it. "Take in a few, Patience," he cried.'

'I am much obliged to him, and to you also,' repeated Jane. 'Patience, Mr. Halliburton is so much better to-day! Go in, and see him.'

Patience went into the parlour, carrying the oranges with her. When she came out again, there was a grave expression on her serene face.

'Thee will do well not to count upon this apparent improvement in thy husband.'

Jane's heart went down considerably. 'I do not exactly count upon it, Patience,' she confessed; 'but he does seem to have changed so much for the better, that I feel in greater spirits than I have felt this many a day. His cough seems almost well.'

'I do not wish to throw a damp upon thee; still, were I thee, I would not reckon upon it. These sudden improvements sometimes turn out to have been deceitful. Fare thee well!'

Jane went into the parlour. There were the children gathered round the plate of oranges, 'Mamma, do look!' cried Janey. 'Are they not nice? There are six: one apiece for us all. I wonder if papa could eat one. Gar, you are not to touch. Papa, could you eat an orange?'

Unseen by the children, Mr. Halliburton had been straining his eager gaze upon the oranges. His mouth parched with inward fever, his throat dry, they appeared to him, coming thus unexpectedly before his sight, what the long-wished-for

spring of water is to the fainting traveller in the Eastern desert. Jane caught the look, and handed the plate to him. 'You are wishing for one, Edgar?'

'I am very thirsty,' he said, in a tone savouring of apology, the oranges seeming to belong more properly to the children than to him. 'I think I must eat mine before dinner. Cut it in four, will you?'

He took up one of the quarters to suck it—to suck it gratefully. 'It is delicious!' he exclaimed. 'It is so refreshing!'

The children stood around and watched him. They enjoyed oranges, but scarcely with a zest so intense as that.

When Jane returned to the kitchen, she found a helpmate. The maid at the next door, Grace, a young Quakeress, fair and demure, was standing there. She had been sent by Patience to do what she could for half an hour. 'How considerate she is!' thought grateful Jane.

They dined in comfort, Grace waiting on them. Afterwards the oranges were placed upon the table. Master Gar caught up the plate, and presented it to his mother. 'Papa has had his,' quoth he.

'Not for me, Gar,' said Jane. 'I do not eat oranges. I will give mine to papa.'

The three younger children speedily attacked

theirs. William did not. He left his by the side of the one rejected by his mother, and set the plate by Mr. Halliburton.

'Do you intend these for me, William?'

'Yes, papa.'

Frank looked surprised. 'I say, William, you don't mean to say that you are not going to eat your orange? Why, you were as glad as any of us when they came.'

'I eat oranges when I want them,' observed William, with an affectation of carelessness which betrayed a delicacy of feeling that might have done honour to one older than he. 'I have had too good a dinner to care about oranges.'

Mr. Halliburton drew William towards him, and looked steadfastly into his face with a meaning smile. 'Thank you, my darling,' he whispered: and William coloured excessively as he sat down.

Mr. Halliburton ate the oranges—both—and seemed as if he could have eaten as many more. Then he leaned his head back on the pillow which was placed over his chair, and presently fell asleep.

'Be very still, dear children,' whispered Jane.

They looked round, saw why they were to be still, and hushed their busy voices. William pulled a stool to his mother's feet, and took his seat on it, holding her hand between his.

'Papa will soon be well again now,' he softly said. 'Don't you think so, mamma?'

'Indeed I hope he will,' she answered.

'But don't you *think* it?' he persisted; and Jane detected an anxiety in his tone. Could there have been a shadow of fear upon the boy's own heart? 'He said, mamma, while you were at church, that in another month he should be strong again.'

'Not quite so soon as that, I fear, William. He has been so much reduced, you know. Later: if he goes on as well as he appears to be going on now.'

Jane set the children to that renowned 'game, 'cross questions and crooked answers.' You may have had the pleasure of playing at it: if so, you will remember that it consists chiefly in whispering. It is difficult to keep children quiet long together.

'Where am I?' cried a sudden voice, startling the children in the midst of their silent whispers.

It came from Mr. Halliburton. He had slept about half an hour, and was now looking round in bewilderment, his head starting away from the pillow. 'Where am I?' he repeated.

'You have been asleep, papa,' cried Frank.

'Asleep! Oh, yes! I remember. You are all here, and it is Christmas-day. I have been dreaming.'

'What about, papa?'

Mr. Halliburton let his head fall back on the pillow again. He fixed his eyes on vacancy, and there ensued a silence. The children looked at him.

'Singular things are dreams,' he presently exclaimed. 'I thought I was on a broad, broad road —an immense road that I could not see the sides of, and it was crowded with people. We were all going one way, stumbling and tripping along——'

'What made you stumble, papa?' interrupted Janey, whose busy tongue was ever ready.

'The road was full of impediments,' continued Mr. Halliburton, in a dreamy, abstracted tone, as if his mental eyes were buried in the scene, and he were relating what had actually occurred. 'Stones, and hillocks, and brambles, and shallow pits of water, and long grass that got entangled round our feet: nothing but difficulties and hindrances, there seemed to be. At the end, in the horizon, as far as the eye could reach—very, very far away indeed—a hundred times as far away as Malvern hills appear to be from us—there shone a brilliant light. So brilliant! You have never seen anything like it in life, for the naked eye could not bear such light. And yet we seemed to look at it, and our sight was not dazzled!'

'Perhaps it was like fireworks?' interrupted

Gar. Mr. Halliburton went on without heeding him.

'We were all pressing on to get to the light, though the far journey seemed as if it could never have an end. So long as we kept our eyes fixed on the light, we could see how we walked, and we passed over the hillocks and other rough places without fail. Not without difficulty. But still we did pass them, and advanced. But the moment we took our eyes off the light, then we were stopped: some fell; some wandered sideways, and would not try to go forward; some were torn with the brambles; some found their clothes wet with the water; some stuck in the mud: in short, they could not get on any way. And yet they knew—at least, it seemed that they knew—that if they would only lift their eyes to the beautiful light, and keep them steadfastly on it, they were certain to be helped, and to progress. The few who did keep their eyes on it—very few they were!—steadily bore onwards. The same hindrances, the like difficulties were in their path, so that at times they also felt tempted to despair—to fear they could not get on. But their fears were groundless. So long as they did not take their eyes from the light, the light did not take its rays from them; and it guided them in certainty and safety over the roughness. It was a sure friend; a sure helper

that could not fail; and it was ready to guide every one—all those millions and millions of travellers. To guide them throughout the whole of the way until they had gained it.'

The children had become interested in the recital, and were listening to it with hushed lips. 'Why did they all not let it guide them?' breathlessly asked William. 'Nothing can be more easy than to keep our eyes on a light that does not dazzle. What did you do, papa?'

'It seemed that the light would only shine on one step at a time,' continued Mr. Halliburton, not in answer to William, but evidently absorbed in his own thoughts. 'We could not see further than the one step, but that was sufficient; for the moment we had taken it, then the light shone upon another. And so we passed on, progressing to the end, the light seeming brighter and brighter as we drew near to it.'

'Did you get to it, papa?'

'I am trying to recollect, William. I seemed to be quite close to it. I suppose I awoke then.'

Mr. Halliburton paused, still in thought; but he said no more. Presently he turned to his wife. 'Is it nearly tea-time, Jane? I cannot think what makes me so thirsty.'

'We can have tea now, if you like,' she replied. 'I will go and see about it.'

She quitted the room, and Janey ran after her. In the kitchen, making a great show and parade of being at work amidst plates and dishes, was a damsel of fifteen, her hair twisted about her head in a curious fashion, and her round, green eyes wide open. It was Betsy.

'That was good pudding,' cried she, turning her face to Mrs. Halliburton. 'Better nor mother's.'

She alluded to a slice which had been given her. Jane smiled. 'We want tea, Betsy.'

'Have it in directly, mum," was Miss Betsy's acquiescent response.

Scarcely were the words spoken, when a commotion was heard in the sitting-room. The door was flung open, and the boys called out, the tone of their voices one of utter alarm. Jane, the child, and maid, made but one step to the room. All Jane's fears had flown to 'fire.'

What a sight! Fire had been almost less startling. Mr. Halliburton was lying back on the pillow with a ghastly face, his mouth, chin, and shirt-front stained with blood. He could not speak, but he asked assistance with his imploring eyes. In coughing, he had broken a blood-vessel.

Jane did not faint; did not scream. Her whole heart turned sick, and she felt that the end was come. Janey sank down on the floor with a faint cry, and hid her face on the sofa. One glimpse

was sufficient for Betsy. The moment she had taken it, she subsided into a succession of shrieks and yells; flew out of the house, and burst into that of Mr. Lynn. There she terrified the sober family, by announcing that Mr. Halliburton was lying with his throat cut.

Mr. Lynn and Patience hurried in, ordering Anna to remain where she was. They saw what was the matter, and placed him in a suitable position; Patience helping Mrs. Halliburton to wipe the blood from his face.

'Shall I get the doctor for thee, friend?' asked the Quaker of Jane. 'I shall bring him quicker, maybe, than one of thy lads would.'

'Oh! yes, yes!'

'I warned thee not to be sanguine,' whispered Patience, when Mr. Lynn had gone. 'I feared it might be only the deceitfulness of the ending.'

The ending! what a confirmation of Jane's own fears! she turned her eyes despairingly on Patience.

Mr. Halliburton opened his trembling lips, as though he would have spoken. Patience stopped him.

'Thee must not talk, friend. If thee hast need of anything, can thee not make a sign?'

He gave them to understand that he wanted water. It was to rinse out his mouth. This done, he appeared to be more composed, more at ease.

'There is nothing else that I can do just now,' observed Patience. 'I will go back and take thy little girl with me. See her, hiding there!'

Patience did so. Betsy cowered over the fire in the kitchen, and the three boys and their mother stood round the dying man.

'Children!' he gasped.

'Oh, Edgar! do not speak!' interrupted Jane.'

He smiled as he looked at her, very much as though he knew that it did not matter whether he spoke or remained silent. 'I am at the journey's end, Jane; close to the light. Children,' he panted at slow intervals, 'when I told you my dream, I little thought it was but a type of the present reality. I think it was sent to me that I might tell it you, for I now see its meaning. You are travelling on to that light, as I thought I was—as I have been. You will have the same stumbling-blocks to walk over; none are exempt from them; trials and temptations, and sorrows, and drawbacks. But the light is there, ever shining to guide you, for it is Heaven. Will you always look up to it?'

He gathered their hands together, and held them between his. The boys, awe-struck, bewildered with terror and grief, could only gaze in silence, and listen.

'The light is God, my children. He is above

you, and below you, and round about you everywhere. He is ready to help you at every step and turn. Make Him your guide; put your whole helpless dependence upon Him, implicitly trust to Him to lighten your path, so that you may see to walk in it. He cannot fail. Look up to him, and you will be unerringly guided, though it may be—though it probably will be—only step by step. Never lose your trust in God, and then rest assured He will conduct you to His own bright ending. Jane, let them take it to their hearts! May God bless you, my dear ones! and bring you to me hereafter!'

He ceased, and lay exhausted; his eyes fondly seeking Jane's, her hand clasped in his. Jane's own eyes were dry and burning, and she appeared to be unnaturally calm. Gradually, the fading eyes closed. In a very short time, the knock of Samuel Lynn was heard at the door. He had brought the doctor. William, passing his handkerchief over his wet face, went to open it.

Mr. Parry stepped into the room, and Jane moved from beside her husband to give place to him. 'He sighed heavily a minute or two ago,' she whispered.

The surgeon looked at him. He bent his ear down upon the open mouth, and then softly un-

buttoned the waistcoat, and listened for the beating of the heart. 'His life passed away in the sigh,' murmured the doctor to Jane.

It was even so. Edgar Halliburton had gone into the light.

CHAPTER XV.

THE FUNERAL.

JANE looked around her—looked at all the terrors of her situation. The first burst of grief over, and a day or two gone on, she could not but look at it. She did not know where to turn, or what to do. It is true she placed implicit trust in God; in the LIGHT spoken of by her husband when he was passing away. Throughout her life she had borne an ever-present, lively trust in God's unchanging care; and she had incessantly striven to implant the same trust in the minds of her chileren. But in this season of dread anxiety, of hopeless bereavement, you will not think the less well of her, for hearing that she did give way to despondency, almost to despair.

From tears for him who had been the dear partner of her life, to anxiety for the future of his children—from anxiety for them, to pecuniary distress and embarrassment—so passed on her hours from Christmas night. Calm she had contrived to be in the presence of others; but it was the calm of an aching heart. She dreaded her

own reflections. When she rose in the morning she said, 'How shall I bear up through the day?' and when she went to her bed, it would be, 'How shall I drag through the night?' Tossing, turning, moaning; walking the room in the darkness when no eye was upon her; kneeling, almost without hope, to pour forth her tribulations to God—who would believe that, in the daytime, before others, she could be so apparently serene? Only once did she give way, and that was the day previous to the funeral.

Patience sympathised with her in a reasoning sort of way. It had been next to impossible for Jane to keep her pecuniary anxiety from Patience, who advised and assisted her in making the various requisite arrangements. It was necessary to go to work in the most sparing manner possible, and it ended in Jane's taking Patience into her full confidence.

'If thee can but keep a house over thy head, so as to retain thy children with thee, thee wilt get along. Do not be cast down.'

'Oh, Patience, that is what I have been dwelling upon!—the keeping of the house together. I do not see that I can do it.'

'The furniture is thine,' observed Patience. 'Thee might let two or three of thy rooms, so as to cover the rent.'

'I have thought all that over and over to myself,' sighed Jane. 'But, Patience—allowing that the rent were made in that way—how are we to live?'

'Thee must occupy thy time in some way. Thee can sew. Dost thee know dressmaking?'

'No. Only sufficient of it to make my own plain gowns and Jane's frocks. As to plain sewing. I could never get food at it: it is paid so badly, And there will be the education of my boys and their clothing.'

'Thee hast anxiety before thee; I see it,' said Patience, in a grave tone. 'Still, I would not have thee be cast down. Thee will make thyself ill; and that will not be a good way to mend thy condition.'

Jane sat down, her hands clasped on her knees, her mind viewing her dark troubles. 'If I were but clear I should have better hope,' she said, lifting her face in its sad sorrow. 'Patience, we owe half a year's rent. And there will be the funeral expenses.'

"Hast thee no kindred that would aid thee in thy strait?'

Jane shook her head. The only 'kindred' that she possessed in the old world was one who had barely enough for his own poor wants—her brother Francis.

'Hast thee no little property to dispose of?' continued Patience. 'Watches, or things of that kind?'

There was her husband's watch. But Jane's pale face went crimson at the idea of parting with it in that manner. It was a good watch, and had long ago been promised to William.

'I can understand thy flush of aversion,' said Patience, kindly. 'I would not be the one to suggest aught to hurt thy feelings; but thy necessities may leave no alternative.'

A conviction that they would leave none with her, was already stealing over Jane. She possessed a few trinkets herself, not of much value, and a little silver. All might have to go, not excepting the watch. 'Would there be a difficulty in disposing of them, Patience?' she asked aloud.

'None at all: there is the pawn-shop,' said the plain-speaking Quakeress. 'I do not know what many would do without it. I can tell thee that some of the great ones of this city send their plate to it on occasions. Thee would not like to go to such a place thyself, but thy servant's mother, Elizabeth Carter, is a discreet woman; she would render thee this little service. As I tell thee, if thee can only surmount present difficulties, so as to secure a start, thee may get on.'

Surmount present difficulties! It seemed to

Jane next door to an impossibility. She had the merest trifle of money left, was in debt, and without means, so far as she saw, of earning even food. She paid her last night visit to the room, which contained the coffin, and went thence up to her bed, to toss the night through on her wet pillow, with a burning brow and aching heart.

It was a sad funeral to see, and one of the plainest of the plain. The clerk of the church, who had condescended to come up to escort it—which condescension he did not often vouchsafe to poor funerals, for they gave nothing good to eat and drink—walked first, without a hat-band. Then came the coffin, covered by a pall, and William and Frank behind it. Jane had not sent Gar, poor little fellow! she thought he might be better away. That was all; there were no attendants: the clerk, the two boys, the coffin, and the men who bore it.

It was sad to see. The people stopped to look, as it went along the streets; following with their eyes the poor fatherless children. One young man stood aside, raised his hat, and held it in his hand until the coffin had passed. But the young man had lived in foreign countries, where it is the custom to remain uncovered while a corpse is borne by.

He was buried at St. Martin's Church. And,

singular to say, the officiating minister was the Rev. Mr. Peach. Mr. Peach did not know who it was that he was interring: he had taken the service for St. Martin's rector. William heard his name: how many times had he heard his poor father mention the name, in connection with his hopeful prospects! He burst into wailing sobs at the thought. Mr. Peach glanced off his book to look compassionately at the sobbing boy.

The funeral was over, the last word of the service spoken, the first heaped shovel of earth flung rattling on the coffin. The clerk did not pay the compliment of his escort back again; indeed there was nothing to escort, but the two boys. They walked alone, with no company but their hatbands.

In the evening, at dusk, they were gathered together, — Jane, and all the children. Tears seemed to have a lull: they had been shed of late all too plentifully.

'I must speak to you, children,' said Jane, lifting her head and breaking the silence. 'I may as well speak now, as let the days go on first. You are but young, but you are old enough to understand me. Do you know, my darlings, how very sad our position is?'

'In losing papa?' said Janey, catching up her breath.

'Yes, yes, in losing him,' wailed Jane. 'For that comprises more than you suspect. I wish to allude more particularly to the future. My dears, I do not see what is to become of us. We have no money: and we have no one to give us any or to lend us any; no one in the wide world.'

The children did not interrupt; only William moved his chair close against hers. She looked so young in her widow's cap: nearly as young as when, years ago, she had married him who had that day been put out of her sight for ever.

'If we can but keep a roof over our heads,' continued Jane, speaking very softly from the effort to subdue her threatening emotion, 'we may perhaps struggle on. Perhaps. But it will be *struggling;* and you do not know the half implied in the word. We may not have enough to eat. We may be cold and hungry—not once, but continuously; and we shall certainly have to encounter and endure the slights and humiliations attendant on extreme poverty. I do not know that we can retain a home; for we may, in a week or two, be turned from this.'

'But why be turned from this, mamma?'

'Because there is rent owing, and I have not the means to pay it,' she answered. 'I have written to your uncle Francis, but I do not believe he will be able to help me. He——'

'Why can't we go back to London to live?' eagerly interrupted little Gar. 'It was so nice then! it was a better home than this.'

'You forget, Gar, that—that'—here she nearly broke down, and had to stop a minute—'that our income there was earned by your papa. He would not be there to earn it now. No, my dear ones; I have thought the future over in every way—thought until my brain has become confused—and the only possible chance, that I can see, of our surmounting difficulties, so as to enable us to exist, is by endeavouring to keep this home. Patience suggests that I should let part of it to lodgers. I had already thought of that; and I shall endeavour to do so. It may cover the rent and taxes. And I must try and do something else that will find us food.'

The children looked perfectly thunderstruck, especially the two elder ones, William and Jane. 'Do something to find food!' they uttered, aghast. 'Mamma, what do you mean?'

It is so difficult to make children comprehend these unhappy things — those who have been brought up in comfort. Jane sighed, and explained further. Little desolate hearts they were who listened to her.

'William,' she resumed, 'your poor papa's watch was to have been yours; but—I scarcely

like to tell you—I fear I shall be obliged to dispose of it to help our necessities.'

A spasm shot across William's face. But, brave-hearted boy that he was, he would not let his mother see his disappointment, and looked cheerfully at her.

'There is one thought that weighs more heavily on my mind than all—your education. How I shall manage to continue it I do not know. My darlings, I look upon this only in a degree less essential for you than food: you know that learning is better than house and land. I do not yet see my way clear in any way: it is very dark—almost as dark as it can be; and but for one friend, I should despair.'

'What friend is that, mamma? Do you mean Patience?'

'I mean God,' replied Jane. 'I know that He is a sure refuge to those who trust in Him. In my saddest moments, when I think how certain that refuge is, a ray of light flashes over me, bright as that glorious light in your papa's dream. Oh, my dear children! perhaps we shall be helped to struggle on!'

'Who will buy us new clothes?' cried Frank, dropping upon another phase of the difficulty. Jane sighed: it was all terribly indistinct.

'In all the tribulation that will probably come

upon us, the humiliations, the necessities, we must strive for patience to bear them. You do not yet understand the meaning of the term, *to bear;* but you will learn it all too soon. You must bear not only for your own sakes, because it is your lot, and you cannot go from it; not only for mine; but chiefly because it is the will of God. This affliction could not have come upon us unless God permitted it, and I am quite sure, therefore, that it is in some way sent for our good. We shall not be utterly miserable if we can keep together in our house. You will aid me in it, will you not?'

'In what way, mamma?' they eagerly asked, as if wishing to begin something then. 'What can we do?'

'You can aid me by being dutiful and obedient; by giving me no unnecessary anxiety or trouble; by cheerfully making the best of our privations; and you can strive to retain what you have already learnt by going diligently over your lessons together. All this will aid and comfort me.'

William's tears burst forth, and he laid his head on his mother's lap. 'Oh, mamma dear, I will try and do for you all that I can,' he sobbed. 'I will, indeed.'

'Take comfort, my boy,' she whispered, leaning tenderly over him. 'Remember that your last

act to your father was a loving sacrifice, in giving to him the orange that you would have enjoyed. I marked it, William. My darling children, let us all strive to bear on steadfastly to that far-off light, ever looking to God.'

CHAPTER XVI.

TROUBLE.

A WEEK elapsed, subsequent to the burial of Mr. Halliburton. By that time, Jane had looked fully into the best and worst of her condition, and had, so to say, organised her plans. By the disposal of the watch, with what little silver they possessed, and ornaments of her own, she had been enabled to discharge the expenses of the funeral and other small debts, and to retain a trifle in hand for present wants.

On the last day of the week, Saturday, she received an application for the rent. A stylish looking stripling, of some nineteen years, with light eyes and fair hair, called from Mr. Dare to demand it. Jane told him she could not pay him then, but would write and explain to Mr. Dare. Upon which the gentleman, whose manners were haughtily condescending, turned on his heel and left the house, not deigning to say good morning. As he was swinging out at the gate, Patience, coming home from market, with a basket in her

hand, met him. 'How dost thee?' said she to him in salutation. But there was no response from the other, save that his head went a shade higher.

'Do you know who that is?' inquired Jane, afterwards.

'Of a surety. It is young Anthony Dare.'

'He has not pleasing manners.'

'Not to us. There is not a more self-arrogant youth in the town. But his private character is not well spoken of.'

Jane sat down to write to Mr. Dare. Her brother Francis, to whom she had explained her situation, had promised her the rent for the half-year due, sixteen pounds, by the middle of February. He could not let her have it before that period, but she might positively count upon it then. She begged Mr. Dare to accord her the favour of waiting until then. Sealing her note, she sent it to him.

On the Monday following, all was in readiness to *let;* and Jane was full of hope, looking for the advent of lodgers. The best parlour and the two best bed-rooms had been vacated, and were in order. Jane slept now with her little girl, and the boys had mattresses laid down for them on the floor at the top of the house. They were to make the study their sitting-room from henceforth; and

an ornamental card in the window displayed the announcement 'Lodgings.' The more modern word 'apartments,' had not then come in fashion at Helstonleigh.

Patience came in after breakfast with a piece of grey merino in her hand.

'Would thee like to make a frock for Anna?' asked she of Mrs. Halliburton. 'Sarah Locke does them for her mostly, for it is work that I am not clever at; but Sarah sends me word she is too full of work this week to undertake it. I heard thee say thee made Janey's frocks. If thee can do this, and earn half-a-crown, thee art welcome. It is what I should pay Sarah.'

Jane took the merino in thankfulness. It was like a ray of hope, that had come to light up her heart. But the instant before Patience entered, she was wishing that something could arrive for her to do; never supposing that it would arrive. And now it had come!—and would bring her in two-and-sixpence! 'Two-and-sixpence!' we may feel inclined to echo, in undisguised contempt for the trifle. Ay! but we may never have known the yearning want of two-and-sixpence; or of ten-and-sixpence, either!

Jane cut out the skirt by a pattern frock, and sat down to make it, her mind ruminating on the future. The children were at their lessons, round

the table. 'I have just two pounds seventeen-and-sixpence left,' deliberated Jane. 'This half-crown will make it three pounds. I wonder how long we can live upon that? We have good clothes, all of us, and for the present the boys' boots are good. If I can let the rooms, we shall have the rent, so that food is the chief thing to look to. We must spin the money out: we must live upon dry bread and potatoes, and a little milk, until something comes in. I wonder if five shillings a week would pay for bare food, and for coals? I fear——'

Jane's busy dreams were interrupted. The front gate was swung open, and two people, men or gentlemen, approached the house-door and knocked. Their movements were so quick that Jane caught but a glimpse of them. 'See who it is, will you, William?'

She heard them walk in, and ask if she was at home. Putting down her work, she shook the threads from her black dress and went out to them, William returning to his lessons.

The visitors were standing in the passage: one well-dressed man and one shabby one. The former made a civil demand for the half-year's rent due. Jane replied that she had written to Mr. Dare on the previous Saturday, explaining things to him, and asking him to wait a short while.

'Mr. Dare cannot wait,' was the rejoinder of the applicant, still speaking civilly. 'You must allow me to remark, ma'am, that you are strangers to the town; that you have paid no rent since you entered the house——'

'We believed it was the custom to pay half-yearly, as Mr. Dare did not apply for it at the Michaelmas quarter,' interrupted Jane. 'We should have paid then, had he asked for it.'

'At any rate, it is not paid,' was the reply. 'And—I am sorry, ma'am, to be under the necessity of leaving this man in possession until you do pay!'

They walked deliberately into the best parlour; and Jane, amidst a rushing feeling of despair, that turned her heart to sickness, knew that a seizure had been put into the house.

As she stood in her bewilderment, Patience entered by the back door, the way she always did enter, and caught a glimpse of the shabby man. She drew Jane into the kitchen.

'What does that man do here?' she inquired.

For answer Jane sank down upon a chair, and burst into a storm of sobs, so violent as to surprise the calm Quakeress. She turned and shut the door.

'Hush thee! Now hush thee! Thy children will hear and be terrified. Art thee behind with thy taxes?'

For some minutes Jane could not reply. 'Not for taxes,' she said; 'they are paid. Mr. Dare has put him in for the rent.'

Patience revolved the news in considerable astonishment. 'Nay, but I think thee must be in error. Thomas Ashley would not do such a thing.'

'He has done it,' sobbed Jane.

'It is not in accordance with his character. He is a humane and considerate man. Verily I grieve for thee! That man is not an agreeable inmate of a house. We had him in ours last year!'

'You!' uttered Jane, surprise penetrating even to her own grief. 'You!'

'They force us to pay church-rates,' explained Patience. 'We have a scruple to do so, believing the call unjust. For years Samuel Lynn had paid the claim, to avert consequences; but last year he and many more Friends stood out against it. The result was, that that man, now in thy parlour, was put into our house. The amount claimed was one pound nine shillings; and they took out of our house, and sold, goods which had cost us eleven pounds, and which were equal to new.'

'Oh, Patience, tell me what I had better do!' implored Jane, reverting to her own trouble. 'If we are turned out and our things sold, we must

go to the workhouse. We cannot lie in the streets.'

'Indeed, I feel incompetent to advise thee. Had thee not better see Anthony Dare, and try thy persuasion that he would remove the seizure out again, and wait?'

'I will go to him at once,' feverishly returned Jane. 'You will allow Janey to remain with you, Patience, while I go?'

'Of a surety I will. She——'

At that moment the children burst into the kitchen, one after the other. 'Mamma, who is that shabby-looking man come into the study? He has seated himself right in front of the fire, and is knocking it about. And the other is looking at the tables and chairs.'

It was Frank who spoke; impetuous Frank. Mrs. Halliburton cast a despairing look around her, and Patience drew their attention.

'That man is here on business,' she said to them. 'You must not be rude to him, or he will be ten times more rude to you. The other one will soon be gone. Your mother is going abroad for an hour; perhaps when she returns she will rid the house of him. Jane, child, thee can come with me and take thy dinner with Anna.'

Mrs. Halliburton waited until the superior-looking of the men was gone, and then started.

It was a raw, cold day—what some people call a black frost. Black and gloomy it all looked to her, outwardly and inwardly, as she traversed the streets to the office of Mr. Dare. Patience had directed her, and the plate on the door, 'Mr. Dare, Solicitor,' showed her the right house. She stepped inside that door, which stood open, and knocked at one on her right hand in the passage. 'Clerks' Room' was inscribed on it.

'Come in.'

Three or four clerks were in it. In one of them she recognised him who had just left her house. The other clerks appeared to defer to him, and called him 'Mr. Stubbs.' Jane, giving her name, said she wished to see Mr. Dare, and the request was conveyed to an inner room. It brought forth young Anthony.

'My father is busy and cannot see you,' was his salutation. 'I can hear anything you may have to say. It will be the same.'

'Thank you,' replied Jane, in a courteous tone, very different from his. 'But I would prefer to see Mr. Dare.'

'He is engaged, I say,' sharply repeated Anthony.

'I will wait, then. I must see him.'

Anthony Dare stalked back again. Jane, seeing a bench against the wall, sat down. It was about

half-past twelve when she arrived there, and when the clock struck two, there she was, still. Several clients, during that time, had come and gone; *they* were admitted to Mr. Dare, but she sat on, neglected. At two o'clock Anthony came through the room with his hat on. He appeared to be going out.

'What! are you here still?' he exclaimed, in genuine or in affected surprise; never, in his ill manners, removing his hat—he of whom it was his delight to hear it said that he was the most complete gentleman in Helstonleigh. 'I assure you it is not of the least use your waiting. Mr. Dare will not be able to see you.'

'Mr. Dare can surely spare me a minute when he has done with others.'

'He cannot to-day. Can you not say to me what you want to say?'

'Indeed I must see Mr. Dare himself. I will wait on, if you will allow me, hoping to do so.'

Anthony Dare vouchsafed no reply, and went out. One or two of the clerks looked round. They appeared not to understand why she sat on so persistently, or why Mr. Dare refused to see her.

In about an hour's time the inner door opened. A tall man, with a bold, free countenance, looked into the room. Jane supposed it to be Mr. Dare,

Jane rose and approached him. 'Will you allow me a few minutes' conversation?' she asked. 'I presume you are Mr. Dare?'

He put up his hands as if to fence her off. 'I have no time; I have no time,' he reiterated, and shut the door in her face. Jane sat down again on the bench. 'Stubbs, I want you,' came forth from Mr. Dare's voice, he opening the door an inch to speak it.

Stubbs went in, remained a few minutes, and then returned, put on his hat, and walked out. His departure was the signal for considerable relaxation in the office duties. 'When the cat's away—' you know the rest. Yawning, stretching, whispering, and laughing supervened. One of the clerks took from his pocket a paper of the biscuits called 'Union' in Helstonleigh, and began eating them. Another pulled out a bottle, and solaced himself with some of the contents—whatever they might be. Suddenly the man with the biscuits got off his stool, and offered them to Mrs. Halliburton. Her pale, sad face may have prompted his good-nature to the act.

'You have waited a good while, ma'am, and perhaps have lost your dinner through it,' he said.

Jane took one of them. 'You are very kind. Thank you,' she faintly said.

But not a bit of it could she swallow. She had taken a slice of dry toast for her breakfast that morning, with half a cup of milk; and it was a long while since she had had a sufficiency of food at any meal. She felt weak, sick, faint; but anxiety and suspense were at work within, parching her throat, destroying her appetite. She held the biscuit in her fingers, resting on her lap, and, in spite of her efforts, the rebellious tears forced themselves to her eyes. Raising her hand, she quietly let fall her widow's veil.

A poor-looking man came in, and counted out eight shillings, laying them upon the desk. 'I couldn't make up the other two this week, I couldn't, indeed,' he said, with trembling eagerness. 'I'll bring twelve next week, please to say.'

'Mind you do,' responded one of the clerks; 'or you know what will be in store for you.'

The man shook his head. He probably did know; and, in going out, was nearly knocked over by a handsome lad of seventeen, who was running in. Very handsome were his features; but they were marred by the free expression which characterised Mr. Dare's.

'I say, is the governor in?' cried he, out of breath.

'Yes, sir. Lord Hawkesley's with him.'

'The deuce take Lord Hawkesley, then!' re-

turned the young gentleman. 'Where's Stubbs? I want my week's money, and I can't wait. Walker, I say, where's Stubbs?'

'Stubbs is gone out, sir.'

'What a bother! Halloa! here's some money! What is this?' continued the speaker, catching up the eight shillings.

'It is some that has just been paid in, Master Herbert.'

'That's all right then,' said he, slipping five of them into his jacket pocket. 'Tell Stubbs to put it down to my week's money.'

He tore off. Jane sat on, wondering what she was to do. There appeared to be little probability that she would be admitted to Mr. Dare; and yet, how could she go home as she came—hopeless—to the presence of that man? No; she must wait still; wait until the last. She might catch a word with Mr. Dare as he was leaving. Jane could not help thinking his behaviour very bad in refusing to see her.

The office was being lighted when Mr. Stubbs returned. One of the clerks pointed to the three shillings with his pen. 'Kinnersley has brought eight shillings. He will make it twelve next week. Couldn't manage the ten this, he says.'

'Where are the eight shillings?' asked Stubbs. 'I see only three.'

'Oh, Master Herbert came in, and took off five. He said you were to put it down as his week's money.'

'He'll take a little too much some day, if he's not checked,' was the cynical reply of the senior clerk. 'However, it's no business of mine.'

He put the three shillings in his own desk, and made an entry in a book. After that, he went in to Mr. Dare, who was now alone. A large room, handsomely fitted up. Mr. Dare's table was near one of the windows: a desk, at which Anthony sometimes sat, was at the other. Mr. Dare looked up.

'I could not do anything, sir,' said Stubbs. 'The other party will listen to no proposal at all. They say they'll throw it into Chancery first. An awful rage they are in.'

'Tush!' said Mr. Dare. 'Chancery, indeed! They'll tell another tale in a day or two. Has Kinnersley been in?'

'Kinnersley has brought eight shillings, and promises to bring twelve next Monday. Master Herbert carried off five of them, and left word it was for his week's money.'

'A smart blade!' cried Mr. Dare, apostrophising his son with personal pride. '"Take it when I can," is his motto. He'll make a good lawyer, Stubbs.'

'Very good,' acquiesced Stubbs.

'Is that woman gone yet?'

'No, sir. My opinion is, she means to wait until she sees you.'

'Then send her in at once, and let's get it over,' thundered Mr. Dare.

In what lay his objection to see her? A dread lest she should put forth their relationship, as a plea for his clemency? If so, he was destined to be agreeably disappointed. Jane did not allude to it; would not allude to it. After that interview held with Mrs. Dare, some three or four months before, she had dropped all remembrance of the connection: even the children did not know of it. She only solicited Mr. Dare's leniency now, as any other stranger might have solicited it. Little chance was there of Mr. Dare's acceding to her prayer: he and his wife both wanted Helstonleigh to be free of the Halliburtons.

'It will be utter ruin,' she urged. 'It will turn us, beggars, into the streets. Mr. Dare, I *promise* you the rent for the middle of February. Unless it were certain, my brother would not have promised it to me. Surely you may accord me this short time.'

'Ma'am, I cannot—that is, Mr. Ashley cannot. It was a reprehensible piece of carelessness on my part to suffer the rent to go on for half a year,

considering that you were strangers. Mr. Ashley will look to me to see him well out of it.'

'There is sufficient furniture in my house, new furniture, to pay what is owing three times over.'

'May be, as it stands in it. Things, worth forty pounds in a house, won't fetch ten at a sale.'

'That is an additional reason why I——'

'Now, my good lady,' interrupted Mr. Dare, with imperative civility, 'one word is as good as a thousand; and that word I have said. I cannot withdraw the seizure, except on the receipt of the rent and costs. Pay them, and I shall be most happy to do it. If you stop here all night I can give you no other answer; and my time is valuable.'

He glanced at the door as he spoke. Jane took the hint, and passed out of it. As much by the tone, as by the words, she gathered that there was no hope whatever.

The streets were bright with gas as she hurried along, her head bent, her veil over her face, her tears falling silently. But when she left the town behind her, and approached a lonely part of the road where no eye was on her, no ear near her, then the sobs burst forth uncontrolled.

'No eye on her? no ear near her?' Aye, but

there was! There was one Eye, one Ear, which never closes. And as Jane's dreadful trouble resolved itself into a cry for help, to Him who ever listens, there seemed to come a feeling of peace, of *trust,* into her soul.

CHAPTER XVII.

THOMAS ASHLEY.

FRANK met her as she went in. It was dark; but she kept her veil down.

'Oh, mamma, that's the most horrible man?' he began, in a whisper. 'You know the cheese you bought in on Saturday, that we might not eat our bread quite dry; well he has eaten it up, every morsel, and half a loaf of bread! And he has burnt the whole scuttle-ful of coal! And he swore because there was no meat; and he swore at us because we would not go to the public-house and buy him some beer. He said we were to buy it and pay for it.'

'I said you would not allow us to go, mamma,' interrupted William, who now came up. 'I told him that if he wanted beer he must go and get it for himself. I spoke civilly, you know, not rudely. He went into such a passion, and said such things! It is a good thing Jane was out.'

'Where is Gar?' she asked.

'Gar was frightened at the man, and the

tobacco smoke made him sick, and he cried; and then he lay down on the floor, and went to sleep.'

She felt sick. She drew her two boys into the parlour—dark there, save for the road lamp, which shone in. Pressing them in her arms, completely subdued by the miseries of her situation, she leaned her forehead upon William's shoulder, and burst once more into a most distressing flood of tears.

They were alarmed. They cried with her. 'Oh, mamma! what is it? Why don't you order the man to go away?'

'My boys, I must tell you; I cannot keep it from you,' she sobbed. 'That man is put here to stop, until I can pay the rent. If I cannot pay it, our things will be taken and sold.'

William's pulses and heart alike beat, but he was silent. Frank spoke. 'Whatever shall we do, mamma?'

'I do not know,' she wailed. 'Perhaps God will help us. There is no one else to do it.'

Patience came in, for about the sixth time, to see whether Jane was back, and how the mission had sped. They called her into the cold, dark room. Jane gave her the history of the whole day, and Patience listened in astonishment.

'I cannot but believe that Thomas Ashley must have been misinformed,' said she, presently.

'But that you are strangers in the place, I should say you had an enemy who may have gone to him with a tale that thee can pay, but will not. Still, even in that case, it would be unlike Thomas Ashley. He is a kind and a good man; not a harsh one.'

'Mr. Dare told me he was expressly acting for Mr. Ashley.'

'Well, I say that I cannot understand it,' repeated Patience. 'It is not like Thomas Ashley. I will give thee an instance of his disposition and general character. There was a baker rented under him, living in a house of Thomas Ashley's. The baker got behind with his rent; other bakers were more favoured than he; but he kept on at his trade, hoping times would mend. Year by year he failed in his rent—Thomas Ashley, mark thee, still paying him regularly for the bread supplied to his family. "Why do you not stop his bread money?" asked one, who knew of this, of Thomas Ashley. "Because he is poor, and he looks to my weekly money, with that of others, to buy his flour," was Thomas Ashley's answer. Well, when he owed several years' rent, the baker died, and the widow was going to move. Anthony Dare hastened to Thomas Ashley. "Which day shall I levy a distress upon the goods?" asked he. "Not at all," replied Thomas

Ashley. And he went to the widow, and told her the rent was forgiven, and the goods were her own, to take with her when she left. That is Thomas Ashley.'

Jane bent her head in thought. 'Is Mr. Lynn at home?' she asked. 'I should like to speak to him.'

'He has had his tea and has gone back to the manufactory, but he will be home soon after eight. I will keep Jane till bed-time. She and Anna are happy over their puzzles.'

'Patience, am I obliged to find that man in food?'

'That thee art. It is the law.'

The noise made by Patience in going away, brought the man forth from the study, a candle in his hand. 'When is that mother of yours coming back?' he roared out to the boys. Jane advanced. 'Oh, you are here!' he uttered, wrathfully. 'What are you agoing to give me to eat and drink? A pretty thing this is, to have a officer in, and starve him!'

'You shall have tea directly. You shall have what we have,' she answered, in a low tone.

The kettle was boiling on the study fire. Jane lighted a fire in the parlour, and she sent Frank out for some butter. The man smoked over the study fire, as he had done all the afternoon, and

Gar slept beside him, on the floor, but William went now and brought the child away. Jane sent the man his tea in, and the loaf and butter.

The fare did not please him. He came to the parlour and said he must have some meat; he had had none for his dinner.

'I cannot give it you,' replied Jane. 'We are eating dry toast and bread, as you may see. I sent butter to you.'

He stood there for some minutes, giving vent to his feelings in rather strong language; and then he went back to revenge himself upon the butter for the want of meat. Jane laid her hand upon her beating throat; beating with its tribulation.

Between eight and nine Jane went to the next door. Samuel Lynn had come home for the evening, and was sitting at the table in his parlour, helping the two little girls with a geographical puzzle, which had baffled their skill. He was a little man, quiet in movement, pale and sedate in cature, dry and unsympathising in manner.

'Thee art in trouble, friend, I hear,' he said, placing a chair for Jane, while Patience came and called the children away. 'It is sad for thee.'

'In great trouble,' answered Jane. 'I came in to ask if you would serve me in my trouble. I fancy, perhaps, you can do so if you will.'

'In what way, friend?'

'Would you interest yourself for me with Mr. Ashley? He might listen to you. Were he assured that the money would be forthcoming in February, I think he might agree to give me time.'

'Friend, I cannot do this,' was the reply of the Quaker. 'My relations with Thomas Ashley are confined to business matters, and I cannot overstep them. To interfere with his private affairs would not be seemly; neither might he deem it to be so. I am but his servant, remember.'

The words fell upon her heart like ice. She believed it her only chance—somebody interceding for her with Mr. Ashley. She said so.

'Why not go to him thyself, friend?'

'Would he hear me?' hastily asked Jane. 'I am a stranger to him.'

'Thee art his tenant. As to hearing thee, that he certainly would. Thomas Ashley is of a courteous nature. The poorest workman in our manufactory, going to the master with a grievance, is sure of a patient hearing. But if thee ask me would he grant thy petition, there I cannot inform thee. Patience opines that thee, or thy intentions, may have been falsely represented to him. I never knew him to resort to harsh measures before.'

'When would be the best time to see him? Is it too late to-night?'

'To-night would not be a likely time, friend, to trouble him. He has not long returned from a day's journey, and is, no doubt, cold and tired. I met James Meeking driving down as I came home, he having left the master at his house. They have been out on business connected with the manufactory. Thee might see him in the morning, at his breakfast hour.'

Jane rose and thanked the Quaker. 'I will certainly go,' she said.

'There is no need to say to him that I suggested it to thee, friend. Go as of thy own accord.'

Jane went home with her little girl. Their undesirable visitor looked out at the study door, and began a battle about supper. It ought to comprise, in his opinion, meat and beer. He *insisted* that one of the boys should go out for beer. Jane steadily refused. She was tempted to tell him that the children of a gentleman were not despatched to public-houses on such errands. She offered him the money to go and get some for himself—twopence.

It aroused his anger. He accused her of wanting to get him out of the house by stratagem, that she might lock him out; and he flung the pence back amongst them. Janey screamed, and Gar

burst out crying. As Patience had said, he was not a pleasant inmate. Jane ran upstairs, and the children followed her.

'Where is he to sleep?' inquired William.

It is a positive fact that, until that moment, Jane had forgotten all about the sleeping. Of course he must sleep there, though she had not thought of it. Amidst the poor in her father's parish in London, Jane had seen many phases of distress; but with this particular annoyance she had never been brought into contact. However, it had to be done.

What a night that was for her? She paced her room nearly throughout it, with quiet movement, Jane sleeping placidly—now giving way to all the dark appearance of her position, to uncontrollable despondency; now kneeling and crying for help in her heartfelt anguish.

Morning came; the black frost had gone, and the sun shone. After breakfast Jane put on her shawl and bonnet.

Mr. Ashley's residence was very near—only a little higher up the road. It was a fine, commodious house, almost a mansion, surrounded by a beautiful garden. Jane had passed it two or three times, and thought what a nice place it was. She repeatedly saw Mr. Ashley walk past her house, as he went to or came from the manufac-

tory: she was not a bad reader of countenances, and she judged him to be a thorough gentleman. His face was a refined one, his manner pleasant.

She found that she had gone at an untoward time. Standing before the hall door was Mr. Ashley's open carriage, the groom standing at the horse's head. Even as Jane ascended the steps, the door opened, and Mr. and Mrs. Ashley were coming forth. Feeling terribly distressed and disappointed, she scarcely defined why, Jane accosted the former, and requested a few minutes' interview.

Mr. Ashley looked at her. A fair young widow, evidently a lady. He did not recognise her: he had seen her before, but she was in a different style of dress now.

Mr. Ashley raised his hat as he replied to her. 'Is your business with me pressing? I was just going out.'

'Indeed it is pressing,' she said; 'or I would not think of asking to detain you.'

'Then walk in,' he returned. 'A little delay will not make much difference.'

'Opening the door of a small sitting-room, apparently his own, he invited her to a seat near the fire. As she took it, Jane untied the crape strings of her bonnet and threw back her heavy veil. She was white as a sheet, and felt choking.

'I fear you are ill,' Mr. Ashley remarked. 'Can I get you anything?'

'I shall be better in a minute, thank you,' she panted. 'Perhaps you do not know me, sir. I live in your house, a little lower down. Mrs. Halliburton.'

'Oh, I beg your pardon, madam; I did not remember you at first. I have seen you in passing.'

His manner was perfectly kind and open. Not in the least like that of a landlord who has just put a distress into his tenant's house.

'I have come here to beseech your clemency, your mercy,' she began in agitation. 'I have not the rent now, but if you will consent to wait until the middle of February, it will be ready. Oh, Mr. Ashley, do not oppress me for it! Think of my situation.'

'I never oppressed any one in my life,' was the quiet rejoinder of Mr. Ashley, spoken, however, in a somewhat surprised tone.

'Sir, it is oppression. I beg your pardon for saying so. I promise that the rent shall be paid to you in a few weeks: to force my furniture from me now, is oppression.'

'I do not understand you,' returned Mr. Ashley.

'To sell my furniture under the distress will be entire ruin to me and my children,' she continued.

'We have no resource, no home; we shall have to lie in the streets, or die. Oh, sir, do not take it!'

'But you are agitating yourself unnecessarily, Mrs. Halliburton, I have no intention of taking your furniture.'

'No intention, sir!' she echoed. 'You have put a distress in.'

'Put a what in?' cried he, in unbounded surprise.

'A distress. The man has been in since yesterday morning.'

Mr. Ashley regarded her a few moments in silence. 'Did the man tell you where he came from?'

'It was Mr. Dare who put him in—acting for you. I went to Mr. Dare, and he kept me waiting nearly five hours in his public office before he would see me. When he did see me, he declined to hear me. All he would say was, that I must pay the rent or he should take the furniture: acting for Mr. Ashley.'

A strangely severe expression darkened Mr. Ashley's face. 'First of all, my dear lady, let me assure you that I knew nothing of this, or it should never have been done. I am surprised at Mr. Dare.'

Could she fail to trust that open countenance—

that benevolent eye? Her hopes rose high within her. 'Sir, will you withdraw the man, and give me time?'

'I will.'

The revulsion of feeling, from despair to grief, was too great. She burst into tears, having struggled against them in vain. Mr. Ashley rose and looked from the window; and presently she grew calmer. When he sat down again she gave him the outline of her situation; of her present dilemma; of her hopes—poor hopes that they were!—of getting a scanty living through letting her rooms and doing some sewing or other employment. 'Were I to lose my furniture, it would take from me this only chance,' she concluded.

'You shall not lose it through me,' warmly spoke Mr. Ashley. 'The man shall be dismissed from your house in half an hour's time.'

'Oh, thank you, thank you!' she breathed, rising to leave. 'I have not been able to supply him with great things in the shape of food, and he uses very bad language in the hearing of my children. Thank you, Mr. Ashley.'

He shook hands with her cordially, and attended her to the hall door. Mrs. Ashley, a pretty, ladylike woman, somewhat stately in general, stood there still. Well wrapped in velvet and furs, she did not care to return to the warm rooms. Jane

said a few words of apology for detaining her, and passed on.

Mr. Ashley turned back to his room, drew his desk towards him, and began to write. His wife followed him. 'Who was that, Thomas?'

Mrs. Halliburton, our widowed tenant, next door to Samuel Lynn's. You remember I told you of meeting the funeral. Two little boys were following alone.'

'Oh, poor little things! yes. What did she want?'

Mr. Ashley made no reply: he was writing rapidly. The note, when finished, was sealed and directed to Mr. Dare. He then helped his wife into the carriage, took the reins, and sat down beside her. The groom took his place in the seat behind, and Mr. Ashley drove round the gravel drive, out at the gate, and turned towards Helstonleigh.

'Thomas, you are going the wrong way!' said Mrs. Ashley, in consternation. 'What are you thinking of?'

'I shall turn directly,' he answered. There was a severe look upon his face, and he drove very fast, by which signs Mrs. Ashley knew something had put him out. She inquired, and he gave her the outline of what he had just heard.

'How could Anthony Dare act so?' involuntarily exclaimed Mrs. Ashley.

'I don't know. I shall give him a piece of my mind to-morrow more plainly than he will like. This is not the first time he has attempted a rascally action under cover of my name.'

'Shall you lose the rent?'

'I think not, Margaret. She said not, and she carries sincerity in her face. I am sure I shall not lose it if she can help it. If I do, I must—that's all. I never yet added to the trouble of those in distress, and I never will.'

He pulled up at Mrs. Halliburton's house, which she had just reached also. The groom came to the horse, and Mr. Ashley entered. The 'man' was comfortably stretched before the study fire, smoking his short pipe. Up he jumped when he saw Mr. Ashley, and smuggled his pipe into his pocket. His offensive manner had changed to humble servility.

'Do you know me?' shortly inquired Mr. Ashley.

The man pulled his hair in token of respect. 'Certainly, sir. Mr. Ashley.'

'Very well. Carry this note to Mr. Dare.'

The man received the note in his hand, and held it there, apparently in some perplexity. 'May I leave, sir, without the authority of Mr. Dare?'

'I thought you said you knew me,' was Mr. Ashley's reply, marked displeasure in his tone.

'I beg pardon, sir,' replied the man, pulling his hair again, and making a movement of departure.

'I suppose I bain't a-coming back, sir?'

'You are not.'

He took up a small bundle, tied in a blue handkerchief, which he had brought with him, and appeared excessively careful of, caught at his battered hat, ducked his head to Mr. Ashley, and quitted the house, the note held between his fingers. Would you like to see what was inside it?

'Dear Sir,—I find that you have levied a distress on Mrs. Halliburton's goods for rent due to me. That you should have done so without my authority astonishes me much; that you should have done so at all, knowing what you do know of my principles, astonishes me more. I send the man back to you. The costs of this procedure you will either set down to me, or pay out of your own pocket, whichever you may deem the more just; but you will *not* charge them to Mrs. Halliburton. Have the goodness to call upon me to-morrow morning in East Street.

'THOMAS ASHLEY.'

'He will not trouble you again, Mrs. Halliburton,' observed Mr. Ashley, with a pleasant smile, as he went out to his carriage.

Jane stood at her window. She watched the man go towards Helstonleigh with the note; she watched Mr. Ashley step into his seat, turn his horse, and drive up the road. But all things were looking misty to her, for her eyes were dim.

'God did hear me,' was her earnest thought.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HONEY FAIR.

Helstonleigh abounded with glove manufactories. It is a trade that may be said to be a blessing to the localities where it is carried on, since it is one of the very few employments that furnish to the poor female population easy, clean, and profitable work *at their own homes.* The evils arising to women who go out to work in factories have been rehearsed over and over again; and the chief evil—we will put others out of sight—is, that it takes the married woman from her home and her family. Her young children drag themselves up in her absence, for worse or for better; alone they must do it, for she has to be away, toiling for daily bread. There is no home privacy, no home comfort, no home happiness; the factory is their life, and other interests give way to it. But with glove-making, the case is different. While the husbands are abroad at the manufactories, pursuing their day's work, the wives and elder daughters are earning money

easily and pleasantly at home. The work is clean and profitable; all that is necessary for its accomplishment being common skill as a seamstress.

Not five minutes' walk from Mrs. Halliburton's house, nearer to Helstonleigh, a turning out of the main road led you to quite a colony of workwomen—gloveresses, as they are termed in the local phraseology. It was a long and wide lane; the houses, some larger, some smaller, built on either side it. A road quite wide enough for health, if the inhabitants had but kept it as it ought to have been kept: which they did not. The highway was made a common receptacle for refuse. It was so much easier to open the kitchen door (most of the houses were entered at once by the kitchen), and to 'chuck' things out, *pêle mêle*, rather than be at the trouble of conveying them to the proper receptacle, the dust-heap at the back. Ashes, cabbage-leaves, bones, egg-shells, potato-peelings, heads and tails of herrings, choked up the gutters in front; a dead dog or cat being often added by way of variety. Occasionally a solitary policeman would come, picking his way through the dirt, and order it to be removed; or, as the women phrased it, 'blow off at them;' upon which, some slight improvement would be visible for a day or two. The euphonious name

of this place was Honey Fair; though, in truth, it was redolent of nothing so pleasant as honey.

Of the occupants of these houses, the husbands and elder sons were all glove operatives; several of them in the manufactory of Mr. Ashley. The wives sewed the gloves at home. Many a similar colony to Honey Fair was there in Helstonleigh, but in hearing of one set you hear of all. The trade was extensively pursued. Some very few of the manufactories were, like Mr. Ashley's, of large extent: others there were which, in their little orbit, comprised not half a score workmen, all told; but whose masters alike dignified themselves by the title of 'manufacturer.'

There flourished a shop in the general line in Honey Fair, kept by a Mrs. Buffle, a great gossip. Her husband, a well-meaning, steady little man, mincing in his speech and gait, scrupulously neat and clean in his attire, and thenceforth called 'the dandy,' was the chief workman at one of the smallest of the establishments. He had three men and two boys under him; and so he styled himself the 'foreman.' Nobody knew half so much of the affairs of their neighbours as did Mrs. Buffle; nobody could tell of the ill-doings and shortcomings of Honey Fair as she could. Many a gloveress girl, running in at dusk for a halfpenny candle, did not receive it until she had

first submitted to a lecture from Mrs. Buffle. Not that her custom was all of this ignoble description: some of the gentlemen's houses in the vicinity would deal with her in a chance way, when out of articles at home. Her wares were good; her home-cured bacon was particularly good. Amidst other olfactory treats, indigenous to Honey Fair, was that of pigs and pig-sties, kept by Mrs. Buffle.

Occasionally Mrs. Halliburton would go to this shop: it was nearer to her house than any other; and, in her small way, had been extensively patronized by her. Of all her customers, Mrs. Halliburton was the one who most puzzled Mrs. Buffle. In the first place, she never gossiped; in the second, though evidently a lady, she would carry her purchases home herself. The very servants from the large houses, coming flaunting in their smart caps, would loftily order their pound of bacon or shilling's worth of eggs sent home for them. Mrs. Halliburton took hers away in her own hand; and this puzzled Mrs. Buffle. 'But her pays ready money,' observed that lady, when relating this to another customer, 'so 'taint my place to grumble.'

During the summer weather, whenever Jane had occasion to walk through Honey Fair, on her way to this shop, she would linger to admire the

women, at their open doors and windows, busy over their nice clean work. Rocking the cradle with one foot, or jogging the baby on their knees, to a tune of their own singing, their hands would be ever active at their employment. Some made the gloves; that is, seamed the fingers together and put in the thumbs, and these were called 'makers.' Some welted, or hemmed the gloves round the edge at the wrist; these were called 'welters.' Some worked the three ornamental lines at the back; and these were called 'pointers.' Some of the work was done in what was called a patent machine, whereby the stitches were rendered perfectly equal. And some of the stouter gloves were stitched together, instead of being sewn: stitching so beautifully regular and neat, that a stranger would look at it in admiration. In short there were, and are, different branches in the making and sewing of gloves, like there are in most trades.

It now struck Jane that she might find employment at this work, until better times should come round. True, she had never worked at it; but she was expert with her needle, and it was easily acquired. She possessed a dry, cool hand, too; a great thing where sewing-silk, sometimes floss, has to be used. What cared she, to lower herself to the employment only dealt out to the poor? Was

she not poor herself? And who knew her in Helstonleigh?

The day that Mr. Ashley removed the dreaded visitor from her house, Jane had occasion to speak to Elizabeth Carter, her young servant's mother. At dusk, putting aside the frock she was making for Anna, Jane proceeded to Honey Fair, in which perfumed locality Mrs. Carter lived. An agreement had been entered into that Betsy should still go to Mrs. Halliburton's to do the washing (after her own fashion, but Jane could not afford to be fastidious now), and also what was wanted in the way of scouring—Betsy being paid a trifle in return, and instructed in the mysteries of reading and writing.

'"Taint no profit,' observed Mrs. Carter to a crony, 'but 'taint no loss. Her won't do nothing at home, let me cry after her as I will. Out her goes, gampusing to this house, gampusing to that; but not a bit of work'll her stick to at home. If these new folks can keep her to work a bit, so much the better; it'll be getting her hand in; and better still, if they teaches her to read and write. Her wouldn't learn nothing from the school-missis.'

Not a very favourable description of Miss Betsy. But, what the girl chiefly wanted, was a firm hand held over her. Her temper and dispo-

sition were good; but she was an only child, and her mother, though possessing a firm hand, and a firm tongue too, in general — none more so in Honey Fair—had spoilt and indulged Miss Betsy until her authority was gone.

After her business was over this evening with Mrs. Carter, Jane, who wanted some darning cotton, turned into Mrs. Buffle's shop. That priestess was in her accustomed place behind the counter. She curtseyed twice, and spoke in a low, subdued tone, in deference to the widow's cap and bonnet — to the deep mourning altogether, which Mrs. Buffle's curiosity had not had the gratification of beholding before.

'Would you like it fine or coarse, mum? Here's both. 'Taint a great assortment, but it's the best quality. I don't have much call for darning cotton, mum: the folks round about is always at their gloving work.'

'But they must mend their stockings,' observed Jane.

'Not they,' returned Mrs. Buffle. 'They'd go in naked heels, mum, afore they'd take a needle and darn 'em up. They have took to wear them untidy boots, to cover the holes, and away they go with 'em, unlaced; the tongue hanging down, and the tag a-trailing out half a mile behind 'em. Great big slatterns, they be!'

'They seem always at work,' remarked Jane.

'Always at work!' repeated Mrs. Buffle. 'You don't know much of 'em, mum, or you'd not say it. They'll play one day, and work the next; that's their work. It's only a few of the steady ones that'll work regular, all the week through.'

'What could a good, steady workwoman earn a week at the glove-making?'

'That depends, mum, upon how close she stuck at it,' responded Mrs. Buffle.

'I mean, sitting closely.'

'Oh, well,' debated Mrs. Buffle, carelessly, 'she might earn ten shillings a week, and do it comfortable.'

Ten shillings a week! Jane's heart beat hopefully. Upon ten shillings a week she might manage to exist, to keep her children from starvation, until better days arose. *She*, impelled by necessity, could sit longer and closer, too, than those women perhaps did. Mrs. Buffle continued, full of inward gratulation that her silent customer had come round to gossip at last:

'They be the improvidentest things in the world, mum, these gloveress girls. Sundays they be dressed up as grand as queens, flowers inside their bonnets, and ribbuns out, a-setting the churches and chapels alight with their finery; and then off for walks with their sweethearts, all

the afternoon and evening. Mondays is mostly spent in waste, gathering of themselves at each other's houses, talking and laughing, or, may be, off to the fields again—anything for idleness. Tuesdays is often the same, and then the rest of the week they has to scout over their work, to get it in on the Saturday. Ah! you don't know 'em, mum.'

Jane paid for her darning cotton and came away, much to the regret of Mrs. Buffle's tongue. 'Ten shillings a week,' kept ringing in her ears.

CHAPTER XIX.

MRS. REECE AND DOBBS.

JANE was busy that evening; but the following morning she went into Samuel Lynn's. Patience was in the kitchen, washing currants for a pudding; the maid upstairs at her work. Jane held the body of Anna's frock in her hand. She wished to try it on.

'Anna is not at home,' was the reply of Patience. 'She is gone to spend the day with Mary Ashley.'

Jane felt sorry: she had been in hopes of finishing it that day. 'Patience,' said she, 'I want to ask your advice. I have been thinking that I might get employment at sewing gloves. It seems easy work to learn.'

'Would thee like the work?' asked Patience. 'Ladies have a prejudice against it, because it is the work supplied to the poor. Not but what some ladies in this town, willing to eke out their means, do work at it in private. They get the work brought out to them, and taken in.'

'That would be the worst for me,' observed

Jane; 'the taking in of the work. I do fear I should not like it.'

'Of course not. Thee could not go to the manufactory, and stand amid the crowd of women, for thy turn to be served, as one of them. Wait thee an instant.'

Patience dried her hands upon the roller-towel, and took Jane into the best parlour, the one less frequently used. Opening a closet, she reached from it a small peculiar looking machine, and some unmade gloves: the latter were in a basket covered over with a white cloth.

'This is different work from what the women do,' said she. 'It is what is called the French point, and is confined to a few of the chief manufacturers. It is not allowed to be done publicly, lest all should get hold of the stitch. Those who employ the point have it done in private.'

'Who does it here?' exclaimed Jane.

'I do,' said Patience, laughing. 'Did thee think I should be like the fine ladies, ashamed to put my hand to it? I and James Meeking's wife do all that is at present being done for the Ashley manufactory. But now, look thee. Samuel Lynn was saying only last night, that they must search out for some other hand who would be trustworthy, for they want more of the work done. It is easy to learn, and I know they would give it thee. It

is a little better paid than the other work, too. Sit thee down and try it.'

Patience fixed the back of the glove in the pretty little square machine, took the needle—a peculiar one—and showed how it was to be done. Jane, in a glow of delight, accomplished some stitches readily.

'I see thee would be handy at it,' said Patience. 'Thee can take the machine in-doors to-day and practise. I will give thee a piece of old leather to exercise upon. In two or three days thee may be quite perfect. I do not work very much at it myself, at which Samuel Lynn grumbles. It is all my own profit, what I earn, so that he has no selfish motive in urging me to work, except that they want more done of it. But I have my household matters to attend to, and Anna takes up my time. I get enough for my clothes, and that is all I care for.'

'I know I could do it! I could do it well, Patience.'

'Then I am sure thee may have it to do. They will supply thee with a machine, and Samuel Lynn will bring thy work home and take it back again, as he does mine. He——'

William was bursting in upon them with a beaming face. 'Mamma, make haste home. Two ladies are asking to see the rooms.'

Jane hurried in. In the parlour sat a pleasant-looking old lady in a large black silk bonnet. The other, smarter, younger (but *she* must have been a good forty), and very cross-looking, wore a leghorn bonnet with green and scarlet bows. She was the old lady's companion, housekeeper, servant, all combined in one, as Jane found afterwards.

'You have lodgings to let, ma'am,' said the old lady. 'Can we see them?'

'This is the sitting-room,' Jane was beginning; but she was interrupted by the smart one in a snappish tone.

'*This* the sitting-room! D'ye call this furnished!'

'Don't be hasty, Dobbs,' rebuked her mistress. 'Hear what the lady has to say.'

'The furniture is plain, certainly,' acknowledged Jane. 'But it is new, and clean. That is a most comfortable sofa. The bed-rooms are above.'

The old lady said she would see them, and they proceeded up-stairs. Dobbs put her head into one room, and withdrew it with a shriek. 'This room has got no bed-side carpets.'

'I am sorry to say that I have no bed-side carpets at present,' said Jane, feeling all the discouragement of the avowal. 'I will get some as

soon as I possibly can, if any one taking the rooms will kindly do without them for a little while.'

'Perhaps we might, Dobbs,' suggested the old lady, who appeared to be of an accommodating, easy nature; readily satisfied.

'Begging your pardon, ma'am, you'll do nothing of the sort,' returned Dobbs. 'We should have you doubled up of cramp, if you clapped your hot feet on to a cold floor. *I* am not going to do it.'

'I never do have the cramp, Dobbs.'

'Which is no reason, ma'am, why you never may,' authoritatively returned Dobbs.

'What a lovely view it is from these back windows!' exclaimed the old lady. 'Dobbs, do you see the Malvern Hills?'

'We don't eat and drink views,' testily responded Dobbs.

'Pleasant to look at, though,' said her mistress. 'I like these rooms. Is there a closet, ma'am, or small apartment, that we could have for our trunks, if we came?'

'We are not a-coming,' interrupted Dobbs, before Jane could answer. 'Carpetless floors won't suit us, ma'am.'

'There is a closet here, over the entrance,' said Jane to the old lady, as she opened the door of it.

'Our own boxes are in it now, but I can have them moved up-stairs.'

'So! there's a cock-loft, is there?' put in Dobbs.

'A what?' cried Jane, who had never heard the word. 'There is nothing up-stairs but an attic. A garret, as it is called here.'

'Yes,' burst forth Dobbs, 'it is called a garret by them that want to be fine. Cock-loft is good enough for us decent folk: we've never called it nothing else. Who sleeps up there?' she summarily demanded.

'My little boys. This was their room, but I have put them up-stairs that I may let it.'

'There, ma'am!' said Dobbs, triumphantly, as she turned to her mistress. 'You'll believe me another time, I hope! I told you I knew there was a pack of children. One of 'em opened the door to us.'

'Perhaps they are quiet children,' said the old lady, who had been so long used to the grumbling and domineering of Dobbs, that she took it as a matter of course.

'They are, indeed,' said Jane, 'quiet, good children. I will answer for it that they will not disturb you in any way.'

'I should like to see the kitchen, ma'am,' said the old lady.

'We only want the use of it,' snapped Dobbs. 'Our kitchen fire goes out after dinner, and I boil the kettle for tea in the parlour.'

'Would attendance be required?' asked Jane of the old lady.

'No, it wouldn't,' answered Dobbs, in the same tart tone. 'I wait upon my missis, and I wait upon myself, and we have a woman in to do the cleaning, and the washing goes out.'

The answer gave great relief to Jane. The *attending* upon lodgers had been a dubious vista, in more respects than one.

'It's a nice convenient kitchen,' said the old lady, as they got in, and she turned herself about in it.

'I'll be bound it smokes,' said Dobbs.

'No, it does not,' replied Jane.

'Where's the coal-house?' asked Dobbs. 'Is there two?'

'Only one,' said Jane. 'It is at the back of the kitchen.'

'Then—if we did come—where could our coal be put?' fiercely demanded Dobbs. 'I must have my coal-house to myself, with a lock and key. I don't want the house's fires supplied from my missis's coal.'

Jane's cheeks flushed as she turned to the old lady. 'Allow me to assure you that your property

—of whatever nature it may be—will be perfectly sacred in this house. Whether locked up or not, it will be left untouched by me and mine.'

'To be sure, ma'am,' pleasantly returned the old lady. 'I'm not afraid. You must not mind what Dobbs says: she means nothing.'

'And our safe for meat and butter,' proceeded that undaunted functionary. 'Is there a key to it?'

'And now about the rent?' said the old lady, giving Jane no time to answer that there was a key.

Jane hesitated. And then, with a flush, asked twenty shillings a-week.

'My conscience!' uttered Dobbs. 'Twenty shillings a-week! And us finding our spoons and linen!'

'Dobbs,' said the old lady, 'I don't see that it is so very much out of the way. A parlour, two bedrooms, a luggage closet, and the kitchen, all furnished——'

'The closet's a empty, dark hole, and the kitchen's only the use of it, and the bedrooms is carpetless,' reiterated Dobbs, drowning her mistress's voice. 'But, if anybody asked you for your head, ma'am, you'd just cut it off and give it, if I wasn't at hand to stop you.'

'Well, Dobbs, we have seen nothing else to

suit us up here. And you know I want to settle myself at this end of the town, on account of its being high and dry. Parry says I must.'

'We have not half-looked yet,' said Dobbs.

'A pound a-week is a good price, ma'am; and we have not paid quite so much where we are: but I don't know that it's unreasonable,' continued the old lady to Jane. 'What shall we do, Dobbs?'

'Do, ma'am! Why, of course you'll come out and try higher up. To take these rooms without looking out for others, would be as bad as buying a pig in a poke. Come along, ma'am. Bedrooms without carpets won't do for us at any price,' she added to Jane by way of a parting salutation.

They left the house, the lady with a cordial good morning, Dobbs with none at all; and they went quarrelling up the road. That is, the old lady reasoning, and Dobbs disputing. The former proposed, if they saw nothing to suit them better, to purchase bedside carpeting: upon which Dobbs accused her of wanting to bring herself to the workhouse.

Patience, who had watched them away, from her parlour window, came in to learn the success. She brought in with her the machine, a plain piece of leather, the size of the back of a glove, neatly fixed in it. Jane's tears were dropping.

'I think they would have taken them had there been carpets to the beds,' sighed she. 'Oh, Patience, what a help it would have been! I asked a pound a-week.'

'Did thee? That was a good price, considering thee would not have to give attendance.'

'How do you know I should not?' asked Jane.

'Because I know Hannah Dobbs waits upon her mistress,' replied Patience. 'She is the widow of Joseph Reece. He left her well off. I heard they were coming to live up this way. Did they quite decline then? Because, I can tell thee what. We have some strips of bedside carpet not being used, and I would not mind lending them till thee can buy. It is a pity thee should lose the letting for the sake of a bit of carpet.'

Jane looked up gratefully. 'What should I have done without you, Patience?'

'Nay, it is not much: thee art welcome. I would not risk the carpet with unknown people, but Hannah Dobbs is cleanly and careful.'

'She has a very repelling manner,' observed Jane.

'It is not agreeable,' assented Patience, with a smile; 'but she is attached to her mistress, and serves her faithfully.'

Jane sat down to practise upon the leather, watching the road at the same time. In about an

hour she saw Mrs. Reece and Dobbs returning. William went out and asked if they would step in.

They were already coming. They had seen nothing they liked so well. Jane said she believed she could promise them bedside carpets.

'Then, I think, we will decide, ma'am,' said the old lady. 'We saw one set of rooms, very nice ones; and they asked only seventeen shillings a-week: but they have a young man lodger, a pupil at the infirmary, and he comes home at all hours of the night. Dobbs questioned them till they confessed that it was so.'

'I know what them infirmary pupils is,' indignantly put in Dobbs. 'I am not going to suffer my missis to come in contract with their habits. There ain't one of 'em as thinks anything of stopping out till morning light. And afore the sun's up they'll have a pipe in their mouths, filling the house with smoke! It's said, too, that there's mysterious big boxes brought to 'em, for what they call the 'furtherance of science:' perhaps some of the churchyard sextons could tell what's in 'em!'

'Well, Dobbs, I think we may take this good lady's rooms. I'm sure we shan't get better suited elsewhere.'

Dobbs only grunted. She was tired with her

walk, and had really no objection to the rooms; except to the price: that, she persisted in disputing as outrageous.

'I suppose you would not take less,' said the old lady to Jane.

Jane hesitated; but it was impossible for her to be otherwise than candid and truthful. 'I would take a trifle less, sooner than not let you the rooms; but I am very poor, and every shilling is a consideration with me.'

'Well, I will take them at the price,' concluded the good-natured old lady. And Dobbs, if you grumble, I can't help it. Can we come in—let me see?—this is Wednesday——'

'I won't come in on a Friday for anybody,' interrupted Dobbs in a fierce tone.

'We will come in on Tuesday next, ma'am,' decided the old lady. 'Previous to that, I'll send in a trolley of coal, if you'll be so kind as receive it.'

'And to lock it up,' snapped Dobbs.

CHAPTER XX.

THE GLOVE OPERATIVES.

At the hours of going to and leaving work, Helstonleigh's streets were alive with glove operatives, some being in one branch of the trade, some in another. There were parers, grounders, leather-sorters, dyers, cutters, makers-up, and else: all being necessary, besides the sewing, to turn out one pair of gloves; though, I dare say, you did not think it. The wages varied, according to the particular work, or the men's ability and industry, from fifteen shillings per week to twenty-five: but all could earn a good living. If a man gained more than twenty-five, he had a stated salary; as was the case with the foremen. These wages, joined to what was earned by the women, were sufficient to maintain a comfortable home, and to bring up children decently. Unfortunately the same drawbacks prevailed in Helstonleigh, which are but too common elsewhere: and they may be classed under one general head — improvidence. The men were

given to idle away at the public-houses more time than was good for them: the women to scold and to quarrel. Some were slatterns; a great many gave their husbands the welcome of a home of discomfort, ill-management, and dirt: which, of course, had the effect of sending them out all the more surely.

Just about this period, the men had their especial grievance—or thought they had: and that was, a low rate of wages and not full employment. Had they paid a visit to other places and compared their wages with some, earned by operatives of a different class, they had found less cause to complain. The men were rather given to compare present wages with those which they had earned before the dark crisis (dark so far as Helstonleigh's trade was concerned) when the British ports were opened to foreign gloves. But few, comparatively speaking, of the manufacturers had weathered that storm. Years had elapsed since; but the employment continued scanty, and the wages (I have quoted them to you) low. Altogether, the men were, many of them, dissatisfied. They even went so far as to talk of a 'strike:' strikes being less common in those days than they are in these.

It was Saturday night, and the streets were crowded. The hands were pouring out of the

different manufactories; clean-looking, respectable workmen, as a whole: for the branches of glove-making are mostly of a cleanly nature. Some wore their white aprons; some had rolled them up round their waists. A few—very few, it must be owned—were going to their homes, but the greater portion were bound for the public-house.

One of the most extensively patronised of the public-houses was 'The Cutters' Arms.' On a Saturday night, when the men's pockets were lined, this would be filled. The men flocked into it now, and crowded it, although its room of entertainment was very large. The order from most of them was a pint of mild ale and some tobacco.

'Any news, Joe Fisher?' asked a man, when the pipes were mostly set going.

Joe Fisher tossed his head and growled. He was a tall, dark man; clothes and condition both dilapidated. The questioner took a few whiffs, and repeated his question. Joe growled again, but did not speak.

'Well, you might give a chap a civil answer, Fisher?'

'What's the matter, you two?' cried a third.

'Ben Wilks asks me is there any news!' called out Fisher, indignantly. 'Yah! I thought he might ha' heered on't without asking. Our pay was docked again to-night; that's the news.'

'No!' uttered Wilks.

'It were,' said Fisher, savagely. 'A shilling a week less, good. Who's a-going to stand it?'

'There ain't no help for standing of it,' interposed a quiet-looking man, named Wheeler. 'I suppose the masters is forced to lower. They say so.'

'Have your master forced hisself to it?' angrily retorted Fisher.

'Well, Fisher, you know I be fortunate. As all is, that gets in to work at Ashley's.'

'And precious good care they keep to stop in!' cried Fisher, much aggravated. 'No danger that Ashley's hands 'll give way and afford outsiders a chance.'

'Why should they give way?' sensibly asked Wheeler. '*You* need never think to get in at Ashley's, Fisher, so there's no cause for you to grumble.'

A titter went round at Fisher's expense. He did not like it. 'I might stand my chance with others, if there was room. Who says I couldn't? Come now!'

A man laughed. 'You had better ask Samuel Lynn that question, Fisher. Why, he wouldn't look at you! You are not steady enough for him.'

'Samuel Lynn may go along for a ill-natured

broad-brim!' was Fisher's retort. 'There'd not be half the difficulty in getting in, with Mr. Ashley hisself.'

'Yes, there would,' said Wheeler, quietly. 'Mr. Ashley pays first wages, and he'll have first hands. Quaker Lynn knows what he's about.'

'Don't dispute about nothing, Fisher,' interrupted a voice, borne through the clouds of smoke from the far end of the room. 'To lose a shilling a week is bad, but not so bad as losing all. I have heard ill news this evening.'

Fisher stretched up his long neck. 'Who's that, a-talking? Is it Mr. Crouch?'

It was Stephen Crouch; the foreman in a large firm, and a respectable, intelligent man. 'Do you remember, any of you, that a report arose some time ago about Wilson and King? A report that died away again?'

'That they were on their last legs,' replied several voices. 'Well?'

'Well, they are off them now,' continued Stephen Crouch.

Up rose a man, his voice shaking with tremor. 'It's not true, Mr. Crouch, sure—ly!'

'It is, Vincent. Wilson and King are going to wind up. It will be announced next week.'

'Mercy help us! There'll be forty more hands throwed out! What's to become of us?'

A dead silence fell on the room. Vincent broke it. Hope is strong in the human heart. 'Mr. Crouch, I don't think it can be true. Our wages was all paid up to-night. And we have not heard a breath on't.'

'I know all that,' said Stephen Crouch. 'I know where the money came from, to pay them. It came from Mr. Ashley.'

The assertion astonished the room. 'From Mr. Ashley! Did he tell it abroad?'

'*He* tell it!' indignantly returned Stephen Crouch. 'Mr. Ashley is an honourable man. No. Wilson and King have got a tattler too near to them; that's how it came out. Not but what it would have been known all over Helstonleigh on Monday, all particulars. Every sixpence, pretty near, that Wilson and King have got, is locked up in their stock. They expected remittances by the London mail this morning, and they did not come. They went to the bank. The bank was shy, and would not make advances; and they had nothing in hand for wages. They went to Mr. Ashley and told him their preplexity, and he drew a cheque. The bank cashed that, with a bow. And if it had not been for Mr. Ashley, Ned Vincent, you and the rest of their hands would have gone home to-night with empty pockets.'

'Will Mr. Ashley lose the money?'

'Not he. He knew there was no danger of that, when he lent it. Nobody will lose by Wilson and King. They have got more than enough to pay everybody in full; only their money's locked up.'

'Why are they giving up?'

'Because they can't keep on. They have been losing a long while. What do you ask—what will they do? They must do as others have done before them, who have been unable to keep on. If Wilson and King had given up ten years ago, they had then each a nice little bit of property to retire upon. But it has been sunk since. There are too many others in this city in the same case.'

'And what's to become of us hands that's throwed out?' asked Vincent, returning to his own personal grievance.

'You must try and get taken on somewhere else, Vincent,' observed Stephen Crouch.

'There ain't a better cutter nor Ned Vincent going,' cried another voice. 'He won't wait long.'

'I don't know about that,' returned Vincent, gloomily. 'The masters is overdone with hands.'

'Of all the black luck as ever fell upon a town, the opening of the ports to them foreign French was the worst for Helstonleigh,' broke in the intemperate voice of Fisher.

'Hold th' tongue, Fisher!' exclaimed a sensible

voice. 'We won't get into them discussions again. Didn't we go over 'em, night after night, and year after year, till we was heart-sick?—and what did they ever bring us, but ill-feeling? It's done, and it can't be undone. The ports be open, and they'll never be closed again.'

'Did the opening of 'em ruin the trade of Helstonleigh, or didn't it? Answer me that,' said Fisher.

'It did. We know it to our cost,' was the sad answer. 'But there's no help for it.'

'Oh,' returned Fisher, ironically. 'I thought you was a-going to hold out that the opening of 'em was a boon to the place, and the keeping of 'em open a blessing. That 'ud be a new dodge. *Why* do they keep 'em open?'

'Just hark at Fisher!' said Mr. Buffle, in a mincing tone. 'He wants to know why the Government keeps open the British ports. Don't every dozen of gloves that comes into the country pay a heavy duty? Is it likely the Government would give up that, Fisher?'

'What did they do afore they had it?' roared Fisher. 'If they did without the duty then, they could do without it now.'

'I have heered of some gents as never tasted sugar,' returned Mr. Buffle; 'but I never heered of one, who had got the liking for it, as was will-

ing to forego the use of it. It's a case in pint; the Government have tasted the sweets of the glove duty, and they stick to it.'

'Avaricious wolves!' growled Fisher. 'But you are a fool, dandy, for all that. What's a bit of paltry duty, alongside of our wants? If a few of them great Goverment lords had to go on empty bellies for a month, they'd know what the opening of ports means.'

'In all political changes, such as this, certain localities must suffer,' broke in the quiet voice of Stephen Crouch. 'It will be the means of increasing commerce wonderfully; and we, that the measure crushed, must be content to suffer for the general good. The effects to us can never be undone. I know what you would say, Fisher,' he continued, silencing Fisher by a gesture. 'I know that the ports might be re-closed to-morrow, if the Government so willed it. But it could not undo for us what has been done. It could not repair the ruin that was wrought on Helstonleigh. It could not re-instate firms in business; or refund to the masters their wasted capital; or collect the hands it scattered over the country, to find a bit of work, to beg, or to starve; or bring the dead back to life. It could not do any of this. Neither would it restore a flourishing trade to those of us who are left.'

'What's that last, Crouch?'

'It never would,' emphatically repeated Stephen Crouch. 'A shattered trade cannot be brought together again. It is like a shattered glass: you may mourn over the pieces, but you cannot put them together. Believe me, or not, as you please, my friends, but the only thing remaining for Helstonleigh is, to make the best of what is left to us. There are other trades a deal worse off now than we are.'

'I have talked to ye about that there move—a strike,' resumed Fisher, after a pause. 'We shall get no good till we try it——'

'Fisher, don't you be a fool and show it,' was the imperative interruption of Stephen Crouch. 'I have explained to you till I am tired, what would be the effects of a strike. It would just finish you bad workmen up, and send you and your children into the nearest dry ditch for a floor, with the open skies above you for a roof.'

'We have never tried a strike in Helstonleigh,' answered Fisher, holding to his own opinion.

'And I trust we never shall,' returned the intelligent foreman. 'Other trades may have their strikes if they choose, and it's not our business to find fault with them for it; but the glove trade has hitherto kept itself aloof from strikes, and it's to be hoped it always will. You cannot

understand how a strike works, Joe Fisher, or you'd not let your head be running on it.'

'Others' heads be running on it as well as mine, Master Crouch,' said Fisher, nodding significantly.

'It is not improbable,' was the equable rejoinder of Stephen Crouch. 'Go and strike next week, half a dozen of you. I mean the operatives of half a dozen firms.'

'Every firm in the place must strike,' interrupted Fisher, hastily. 'A few on us doing it, would only make bad worse.'

Stephen Crouch smiled. 'Exactly. But the difficulty, Fisher, will be, that all the firms *won't* strike. Ask the men in our firm to strike; ask those in Ashley's; ask others that we could name —and what would their answer be? Why, that they know when they are well off. Suppose, for argument's sake, that we did all strike; suppose all the hands in Helstonleigh struck next Monday morning, and the manufactories had to be closed? Who would have the worst of it?—we? or the masters?'

'The masters,' returned Fisher, in an obstinate tone.

'No. The masters have good houses over their heads, and their bankers' books to supply their wants while they are waiting—and their orders are not so great that they need fear much pres-

sure on that score. The London houses would dispatch a few extra orders to Paris and Grenoble, and the masters here might enjoy a nice little trip of pleasure to the sea-side while our senses were coming to us. But where should we be? 'Out at elbows, out at pocket, out at heart; some starving, some in the workhouse. If you want to avoid those contingencies, Joe Fisher, you'll keep from strikes.'

Fisher answered by an ironical cheer. 'Here, missis,' said he to the landlady, who was then passing him, 'let's have another pint, after that.'

'That'll make nine pints that you owe for since Monday night, Joe Fisher,' responded the landlady.

'What if it do?' grunted Fisher, irascibly. 'I am able to pay. *I* ain't out of work.'

CHAPTER XXI.

THE LADIES OF HONEY FAIR.

It was Saturday night in Honey Fair. A night when the ladies were at leisure to abandon themselves to their private pursuits. The work of the past week had gone into the warehouses; and the fresh work, brought out, would not be begun until Monday morning. Some of them, as Mrs. Buffle has informed us, did not begin it then. The women mostly cleaned their houses and mended their clothes; some washed and ironed—Honey Fair was not famous for its management—not going to bed till Sunday morning; some did their marketings; and a few, careless and lazy, spent it in running from house to house, or congregated in the road to gossip.

About half-past eight, one of these latter suddenly pulled the latch of a house door, and thrust in her head. It was Joe Fisher's wife. Her face was red, and her cap in tatters.

'Is our Becky in here, Mrs. Carter?'

Mrs. Carter was busy. She was the maternal

parent of Miss Betsy. Her kitchen fire was out, her furniture was heaped one thing upon another; a pail of water stood ready to wash the brick floor, when she should have finished rubbing at the grate, and her hands and face were as grim as the black-lead.

'There's no Becky here,' snapped she.

'I can't find her,' returned Mrs. Fisher. 'I thought her might be along of your Betsy. I say, here's your husband a-coming round the corner. There's Mark Mason, and Robert East, and Dale, along of him. And—my! what has that young 'un of East's been a-doing to hisself? He's black from head to foot. Come and look.'

Mrs. Carter disdained the invitation. She was a hard-working, thrifty woman, but a cross one. Priding herself upon her cleanliness, she perpetually returned loud thanks that she was not as the dirty ones around her. She was the Pharisee amid many publicans.

'If I passed my time a-staring and gossiping as some does, where 'ud my work be?' was her rebuke. 'Shut the door, Suke Fisher.'

Suke Fisher did as she was bid. She turned her wrists back upon her hips, and walked to meet the advancing party, having discerned their approach by the light of the gas lamps. 'Be you a-going to be sold for a blackamoor?' demanded she of the boy.

The boy laughed. His head, face, shoulders, hands, were ornamented with a thick, black liquid, looking not unlike blacking. He appeared to enjoy the treat, as if he had been anointed with some fragrant oil.

'He is not a bad spectacle, is he, Dame Fisher?' remarked the young man, whom she had called Robert East.

'What's a-done it?' questioned she.

'Him and Jacky Brumm got a-larking, and upset the dye-pot upon themselves. We rubbed 'em down with the leather shreds; but it keeps on a-dripping out of their hair.'

'Won't Charlotte warm his back for him!' apostrophized Mrs. Fisher.

The boy threw a disdainful look at her, in return for the remark. 'Charlotte's not so fond of warming backs. She never even scolds for an accident.'

The boy and Robert East were half-brothers. They entered one of the cottages. Robert East and his sister were between twenty and thirty, and the boy was ten. Their mother had died early, and the young boy's mother, their father's second wife, died when the child was born. The father also died. How Robert and his sister, the one then seventeen, the other fourteen, had struggled to get a living for themselves, and to bring up the baby, they alone knew. The manner

in which they had succeeded, was a marvel to many: none were more respectable now than they were, in all Honey Fair.

Charlotte, neat and nice, sat by her bright kitchen fire, a savoury stew cooking on the hob beside it. It was her custom to get something good for supper on a Saturday night. Did she make home attractive on that night to draw her brother from the seductions of the public-house? Most likely. And she had her reward: for Robert never failed to come. The cloth was laid, the red bricks of the floor were bright, and Charlotte's face, as she looked up from her stocking-mending, was bright. It darkened to consternation, however, when she cast her eyes on the boy.

'Tom, what *have* you been doing?'

'Jacky Brumm threw the pot of dye over me, Charlotte.'

'There's not much real damage, Charlotte,' interposed her brother. 'It looks worse than it is. I'll get it out of his hair presently, and put his clothes in a pail of water. What have you got to-night? It smells good.'

He alluded to the supper, and took off the lid of the saucepan to peep in. She had got a bit of stewed beef with carrots; and the savoury steam ascended to Robert's pleased face.

Very few in Honey Fair managed as did Char-

lotte East. How she did her house-work nobody knew. Not a woman, married or single, got through more glove-sewing than Charlotte. Not one kept her house in better order: and the clothes of herself and brothers were neat and respectable, week-days as well as Sundays. Her work was taken in to the warehouse on Saturday mornings, and her marketings were done. In the afternoon she cleaned her house, and by four o'clock was ready to sit down to her mending. Nobody ever saw her in a scuffle, and yet her various work was done; and well done. Perhaps one great secret of it was, that she rose very early in the morning, winter and summer.

'Look here, Robert, is a nice book I bought,' said she, putting a periodical into his hands. 'It comes out weekly. I shall take it in.'

Robert turned over the leaves. 'It seems a very nice book,' he said, presently. 'Here's a paper that tells all about the Holy Land. And another that tells us how glass is made; I have often wondered.'

'You can read it to us of an evening, while I work,' said she. 'It will be quite a help to our getting on Tom: almost as good as sending him to school. I gave——'

The words were interrupted. The door was violently burst open, and a woman entered the

kitchen; knocking at doors, preparatory to entering, not being the fashion in Honey Fair. The intruder was Mrs. Brumm.

'I say, Robert East, did you see anything of my husband?'

'I saw him go into the Horned Ram.'

'Then I wish the Horned Ram was into him!' wrathfully retorted Mrs. Brumm. He vowed faithful as he'd come home with his wages the first thing after leaving work. He knows I have not got a thing in the place for to-morrow—and Dame Buffle a-looking out for her money. I have a good mind to go down to the Horned Ram, and be on to him!'

Robert East offered no opinion upon this delicate point. He remembered the last time Mrs. Brumm had gone to the Horned Ram to be 'on' to her husband, and what it was productive of. A midnight quarrel, that disturbed the slumbers of Honey Fair.

'Who was along of him?' pursued she.

'Three or four of them. Hubbard and Jones, I saw go in; and Adam Thorneycroft.'

A quick rising of the head, as if startled, and a faint accession of colour, told that one of those names had struck, perhaps unpleasantly, on the ear of Charlotte East, 'Where are your own earnings?' she asked of Mrs. Brumm.

'I have had to take them to Bankes's,' was the rueful reply. 'It's a good deal now, and they got in a regular tantrum this week, and wouldn't even wait till Monday. They threatened to tell Brumm, and it frightened me out of my seventeen senses. And now, for him to go into that dratted Horned Ram with his wages! and me without a penny piece! It's not more for what I want to get in, as for the things that is in pawn. I can't iron nothing: the irons is there.'

Charlotte, busy still, turned round. 'I would not put in irons, and such like things, that I wanted to use.'

'I dare say you wouldn't!' tartly responded Mrs. Brumm. 'One has to put in what one's got, and the things our husbands won't miss the sight of. It's fine to be you, Charlotte East, setting yourself up for a lady, and never putting your foot inside the pawnshop, with your clean hands and your clean kitchen on a Saturday night, a-sitting down to a hot supper, while the rest of us is a-scrubbing!'

Charlotte laughed good-humouredly. 'If I tried to set myself up for a lady, I could not be one. I work as hard as anybody; only I get it done betimes.'

Mrs. Brumm sniffed—having no ready answer at hand. And at that moment Tom East, in his

case of black, peeped out of the brew-house, where he had been sent by Charlotte to get the dye off his hands. 'Sakes alive!' uttered Mrs. Brumm, aghast at the sight.

'Jacky's worse than me,' responded Tom, rather proud of having to say so much. Robert explained to her how it had happened.

'And our Jacky's as bad as that!' she cried. 'Won't I wring it out of him!'

'Nonsense,' said Robert; 'it was an accident. Boys will be boys.'

'Yes, they will: and it's not the men as have to wash for 'em and keep 'em clean!' retorted Mrs. Brumm, terribly wrathful. 'And me at a standstill for my irons! and that beast of a Brumm a-stopping out.'

'I will lend you my irons,' said Charlotte.

'I won't take 'em,' was the ungracious reply. 'If I don't get my own, I won't borrow none. Brumm, he'll be a-looking out for his Sunday clean shirt to-morrow, and he won't get it; and that'll punish him more nor anything again. There's not a man in Honey Fair as likes to go sprucer on a Sunday than Brumm.'

'So much the better,' said Charlotte. 'When men lose their pride in their appearance, they are apt to lose it in their conduct.'

'You must always put in your word for folks,

Charlotte East, let 'em be ever so bad,' was Mrs. Brumm's parting salutation, as she went off and shut the door with a bang.

Meanwhile Timothy Carter, Mrs. Carter's husband, had turned into his own dwelling, after quitting Robert East. The first thing to greet him was the pail of water. Mrs. Carter had completed her grate, and was dashing her water on the floor. Timothy received it on his legs.

'What's that for?' demanded Timothy, who was a meek and timid little man.

'Why do you brush in so sharp, then?' cried she. 'Who was to know you was a-coming?'

Timothy had not 'brushed in sharp?' he had gone in quietly. He stood ruefully shaking the wet from his legs, first one, then the other, and afterwards began to pick his way on tiptoe towards the fire-place.

'Now, it's of no use your attempting to sit down yet,' rebuked his wife, in her usual cross accent. 'There ain't no room for you at the fire, and there ain't no warmth in it; it's but this blessed minute lighted. Sit yourself on that table, again the wall, and then your legs 'll be in the dry.'

'And there I may sit for an hour, for you'll be all that time afore you have finished, by the looks on't,' he ventured to remonstrate.

'And half another hour to the end of it,' answered

she. 'There's Betsy, as ought to be helping, a-gadding out somewhere ever since she came home at seven o'clock.'

'You says to me, says you, "You come home to-night, Tim, as soon as work's over, and don't go a-drinking!" You know you did,' repeated Timothy in an injured tone.

'And it's a good thing as you have come! or you'd have heard my tongue in a way you wouldn't like,' was Mrs. Carter's reply.

Timothy sighed. That tongue was the two-edged sword of his life: how dreaded, none save himself could tell. He had mounted on the table, in obedience to orders, but he now got off again.

'What are you after now?' shrilly demanded Mrs. Carter, who was on her knees, scouring the bricks.

'I want my pipe and 'baccy.'

'You stop where you are,' was the imperative answer, 'and wait till I have time to get it;' and Timothy humbly sat down again.

'You might get this done afore night, 'Lizabeth, as I've said over and over again,' cried he, plucking up a little spirit. 'When a man comes home tired, even if there ain't a bit o' supper got for him, he expects a morsel o' fire to sit down to, so as he can smoke his pipe in quiet. It cows him, you see, to find his place in this ruck, where there ain't a dry

spot to put the sole of his foot on, and nothing but a tilting table with unekal legs to sit upon, and——'

'I might get it done afore?' shrieked Mrs. Carter. 'Afore! When, through that Betsy's laziness, a-leaving everything on my shoulders, I couldn't get in my gloving till four o'clock this afternoon! Every earthly thing have I had to do since then. I raked out my fire——'

'What's the good of raking out the fire?' interposed Timothy.

'Goodness help the simpleton! A-wanting to know the good of raking out the fire—as if he was born yesterday! Can a grate be black-leaded while it's hot, pray?'

'It might be black-leaded at some other time,' debated he. 'In a morning, perhaps.'

'I dare say it might, if I had not got my gloving to do,' she answered, trembling with wrath. 'When folks takes out shop work, they has to get on with that—and is glad to do it. Where 'ud you be if I earned nothing? It isn't much of a roof as we should have over our heads, with your paltry fifteen or sixteen shillings a-week. You be nothing but a parer, remember.'

'There's no need to disparage of me, 'Lizabeth,' he rejoined, with a meek little cough. 'You knowed I was a parer afore you ventured on me.'

'Just heave your legs up higher, or you'll be a knocking my cap with your dirty boots,' said Mrs. Carter, who was nearing the table in her scrubbing process.

'I'll stand outside the door a bit, I think,' he answered. 'I am in your way everywhere.'

'Sit where you be, and lift up your legs,' was the reiterated command. Which Timothy obeyed.

Cold and drearily, on he sat, watching the cleaning of the kitchen. The fire did not give out any heat, and the squares of bricks did not dry. He took some silver from his pocket, and laid it in a stack on the table beside him, for his wife to take up at her leisure. She allowed him no chance of squandering *his* wages.

A few minutes, and Mrs. Carter rose from her knees and went into the yard to get a fresh supply of water. Timothy did not wait for a second ducking of his legs. He slipped off the table, took a shilling from the heap, and stole stealthily from the house.

Back came Mrs. Carter, her pail brimming. 'You go over to Dame Buffle's, Tim, and——. Why, where's he gone?'

He was not in the kitchen, that was certain; and she opened the staircase door, and elevated her voice shrilly. 'Be you gone tramping up my

stairs, with your dirty boots? Tim Carter, I say, be you up-stairs?'

Of course Tim Carter was not. Or he had never dared to leave that voice unanswered.

'Now, if he has gone off to any of them sotting publics, he shan't hear the last of it,' she exclaimed, opening the door and gazing as far as the nearest gas light would permit. But Timothy was beyond her eye and reach, and she caught up the money and counted it. Fourteen shillings. One shilling of it gone.

She knew what it meant, and dashed the silver into a wide-necked canister on the high mantel-shelf, which contained also her own earnings for the week. It would have been as much as meek Tim Carter's life was worth, to touch that canister, and she kept it openly on the mantel-piece. Many unfortunate wives in Honey Fair could not keep their money from their husbands, even under lock and key. As she was putting the canister in its place again, Betsy came in. Mrs. Carter turned sharply upon her.

'Now, miss! where have you been?'

'Law, mother, how you fly out! I have only been to Cross's.'

'You ungrateful piece of brass, when you know there's so much to be done on a Saturday night that I can't turn myself round! You shan't go

gadding about half your time. I'll put you from home entire, to a good tight service.'

Betsy had heard the same threat so often that its effect was gone. Had her mother only kept her in one-tenth of the subjection that she did her husband, it might have been better for the young lady. 'I was only in at Cross's,' she repeated.

'What's the good of telling me that falsehood? I went to Cross's after you, but you wasn't there, and hadn't been there. You want a good sound shaking, miss.'

'If I wasn't at Cross's, I was at Mason's,' was the imperturbable reply of Miss Betsy. 'I was at Mason's first. Mark Mason came home and turned as sour as a wasp, because the place was in a mess. She was a-washing of her children, and she'd got the kitchen to do, and he began a-blowing up. I left 'em then, and went in to Cross's. Mason went back down the hill; so he'll come home tipsy.'

'Why can't she get her children washed afore he comes home?' retorted Mrs. Carter, who could see plenty of motes in her neighbours' eyes, though utterly blind to the beam in her own. 'Such wretched management! Children ought to be packed out of the way by seven o'clock.'

'You don't get your cleaning over, any more than she does,' remarked Miss Betsy, boldly.

Mrs. Carter turned an angry gaze upon her; a

torrent of words breaking from her lips. 'I get my cleaning over! I, who am at work every moment of my day, from early morning till late at night! You'd liken me to that good-for-nothing Het Mason, who hardly makes a dozen o' gloves in a week, and keeps her house like a pigsty! Where 'ud you and your father be, if I didn't work to keep you, and slave to make the place sweet and comfortable? Be off to Dame Buffles and buy me a besom, you ungrateful monkey: and then you turn to, and dust these chairs.'

Betsy did not wait for a second bidding. She preferred going for besoms, or for anything else, to her mother's kitchen and her mother's scolding. Her coming back was another affair; she would be just as likely to propel the besom into the kitchen and make off herself, as to enter.

She suddenly stopped now, door in hand, to relate some news.

'I say, mother, there's a-going to be a party at the Alhambra tea-gardens.'

'A party at the Alhambra tea-gardens, with frost and snow on the ground!' ironically repeated Mrs. Carter. 'Be off, and don't be a oaf.'

'It's true, said Betsy. 'All Honey Fair's a-going to it. I shall go, too. 'Melia and Mary Ann Cross is a-going to have new things for it, and——'

'Will you go along and get that besom?' cried

angry Mrs. Carter. 'No child of mine don't go off to their Alhambras, a catching of their death, on the wet grass.'

'Wet grass!' echoed Betsy. 'Why, you never be such a gaby, as to think they'd have a party on the grass! It is to be in the big room, and there's to be a fiddle and a tam——'

'——bourine' never came. Mrs. Carter sent the wet mop flying after Miss Betsy, and the young lady, dexterously evading it, flung-to the door and departed.

A couple of hours later, Timothy Carter was escorted home, his own walking not being of the steadiest. The men with him had taken more than Timothy; but it was that weak man's misfortune to be overcome by a little. You will allow, however, that he had taken enough, having spent his shilling, and gone in debt besides. Mrs. Carter received him—— Well, I am rather at a loss to describe it. She did not actually beat him, but her shrill voice might be heard all over Honey Fair, lavishing hard names upon helpless Tim. First of all, she turned out his pockets. The shilling was all gone. 'And how much more tacked on to it?' asked she, wise by past experience. And Timothy was just able to understand and answer. He felt himself as a poor shrinking lamb in the fangs of a wolf. 'Eight-pence halfpenny.'

'A shilling and eight-pence halfpenny chucked away in drink in one night!' repeated Mrs. Carter. She gave him a short, emphatic shake, and propelled him up the stairs; leaving him, without a light, to get to bed as he could. She had some hours' work down-stairs yet, in the shape of mending of clothes.

But it never once occurred to Mrs. Carter that she had herself to thank for his misdoings. With a tidy room and a bit of cheerful fire to receive him, on returning from his day's work, Timothy Carter would no more have thought of the public-houses than you or I should. And if, like Charlotte East, she had welcomed him with a taste of nice supper, and a pleasant tongue, poor Tim, in his gratitude, had forsworn the public-houses for ever.

Neither, when Mark Mason staggered home, and *his* wife raved at and quarrelled with him, to the further edification of Honey Fair, did it strike that lady that she could be in fault. As Mrs. Carter had said, Henrietta Mason did not overburthen herself with work of any sort: but she did make a pretence of washing her four children in a bucket on a Saturday night, and her kitchen afterwards. The ceremony was delayed, through idleness and bad management, to the least propitious part of the evening. So sure as she had got the bucket before

the fire, and the children collected round it; one in (it would hold but one, and hardly that, as anybody may testify who knows what a bucket is), one just out, roaring to be dried, and the two others waiting their turn for the water, all the lot stark naked—for Mrs. Mason made a point of undressing them at once to save trouble—so sure, I say, as these ablutions were in progress, the children frantically crying, Mrs. Mason boxing, storming, and rubbing, and the kitchen swimming, in would walk the father. Words invariably ensued: a short, sharp quarrel; and he would turn out again for the nearest public-house, where he was welcomed by a social room and a glowing fire. Can anybody be surprised?

You must not think these cases overdrawn; you must not think them exceptional ones. They are neither the one nor the other. They are truthful pictures, taken from what Honey Fair was then. I very much fear the same pictures might be taken from some places still.

CHAPTER XXII.

MR. BRUMM'S SUNDAY SHIRT.

But there's something to say yet of Mrs. Brumm. You saw her turning away from Robert East's door, saying that her husband, Andrew, had promised to come home that night and to bring his wages. Mrs. Brumm, a bad manager, like many of the rest, would probably have received him with a sloppy kitchen, buckets, and besoms. Andrew had had experience of this; and, disloyal knight that he was, allowed himself to be seduced into the Horned Ram. He'd just take one pint and a pipe, he said to his conscience, and be home in time for his wife to get what she wanted. A little private matter of his own would call him away early. Pressed for a sum of money in the week, owing to his club, and not possessing it, he had put his Sunday coat in pledge; and this he wanted to get out. However, a comrade, sitting in the next chair to him at the Horned Ram, had to get *his* coat out of the same accommodating receptacle. Nothing more easy than for him to

bring out Andrew's at the same time; which was done. The coat on the back of his chair, his pipe in his mouth, and a pint of good ale before him, the outer world was as nothing to Andrew Brumm.

At ten o'clock the landlord came in. 'Andrew Brumm, here's your wife a-wanting to see you.'

Now Andrew was not a bad sort of man by any means, but he had a great antipathy to be looked after. Some jokes went round at Andrew's expense; for, if there was one thing the men in general hated more than another, it was that their wives should come in quest of them to the public-houses. Mrs. Brumm got a sharp reprimand; but she saw that he was, as she expressed it, 'getting on,' so she got some money from him and kept her scolding for another opportunity.

She did not go near the pawnbroker's to get her irons out. She bought a bit of meat, and what else she wanted, and returned to Honey Fair. Robert East was closing his door for the night as she passed it. Has Brumm come home?' he asked.

'Not he, the toper! He is stuck at the Horned Ram, a getting in for it nicely. I have been after him for some money.'

'Have you got your irons out?' inquired Charlotte, coming to the door.

'No, nor nothing else; and there's pretty near half the kitchen in. It's him that'll suffer. He have been a-getting out his own coat, but he can't put it on. Leastways, he won't, without a clean collar and shirt; and let him fish for *them*. Wait till to-morrow comes, Mr. Drew Brumm!'

'Was *his* coat in?' returned Charlotte, surprised.

'That it was. Him as goes on so when I puts a thing or two in. He owed some money at his club, and he went and put his coat in for four shillings, and Adam Thorneycroft has been and fetched it out for him.'

'Adam Thorneycroft has!' involuntarily returned Charlotte.

'Thorneycroft's coat was in, too, and he went for it just now, and Brumm give him the ticket to get out his. Smith's daughter told me that. She was a-serving with her mother in the bar.'

'Is Adam Thorneycroft at the Horned Ram still?'

'That he is. Side by side with Brumm. A nice pair of 'em! Charlotte East, take my advice; don't you have nothing to say to Thorneycroft. A woman had better climb up to the top of her topmost chimbley and pitch herself off, head foremost, than marry a man given to drink.'

Charlotte East felt vexed at the allusion: vexed

that her name should be coupled openly with that of Adam Thorneycroft by the busy tongues of Honey Fair. That an attachment existed between herself and Adam Thorneycroft, was true; but she did not wish the fact to become too apparent to others. Latterly, she had been schooling her heart to forget him; for he was taking to frequent public-houses.

Mrs. Brumm went home and was soon followed by her husband. He was not much the worse for what he had taken. He was a little. Mrs. Brumm reproached him with it, and there ensued a wordy war.

They arose peaceably in the morning. Andrew was a civil, well-conducted man: and but for Horned Rams would have been a pattern to three parts of Honey Fair. He liked to be dressed well on the Sunday and to attend the cathedral with his two children; he was very fond of listening to the chanting. Mrs. Brumm—as was the custom generally with the wives of Honey Fair—stayed at home to cook the dinner. Andrew was accustomed to do many odd jobs on the Sunday morning, to save his wife trouble. He cleaned the boots and shoes, brushed his clothes, filled the coal-box with coal, and made himself useful in sundry other ways. All this done, they sat down to breakfast with the two children, the unfor-

tunate Jacky less black than he had been the previous night.

'Now, Jacky,' said Brumm, when the meal was over, 'get yourself ready. It have gone ten. Polly too.'

'It's a'most too cold for Polly this morning,' said Mrs. Brumm.

'Not a bit on't. The walk 'll do her good, and give her a appetite for her dinner. What is for dinner, Bell? I asked you afore, but you didn't answer.'

'It ain't much thanks to you as there's anything,' retorted Mrs. Brumm, who rejoiced in the aristocratic name of Arabella. 'You plant yourself again at the Horned Ram, and see if I worries myself to come after you for money. I'll starve on the Sunday, first.'

'I can't think what goes of your money,' returned Andrew. 'There had not used to be this fuss if I stopped out for half an hour on the Saturday night, with my wages in my pocket. Where does yours go to?'

'It goes in necessaries,' shortly answered Mrs. Brumm. But, not caring, for reasons of her own, to pursue this particular topic, she turned to that of the dinner. 'I have got half a shoulder of mutton, and I'm a-going to take it to the bake'us

with a batter pudden under it, and to bile the taters at home.'

'That's capital!' returned Andrew, gently rubbing his hands. 'There ain't nothing nicer than baked mutton and a batter pudden. Jacky, you brush your hair well. It's as rough as pig's bristles.'

'I had to use a handful of soda to get the dye out,' said Mrs. Brumm. 'Soda's awful stuff for making the hair rough.'

Andrew slipped out to the Honey Fair barber, to be shaved, who did an extensive business on the Sunday morning. When he returned home, he went up to wash and dress, and finally uncovered a deal box, where he was accustomed to find his clean shirt. With all Mrs. Brumm's faults, she had tidy ways. The shirt was not there.

'Bell, where's my clean shirt?' he called out from the top of the stairs.

Mrs. Bell Brumm had been listening for the words to come, and she received them with satisfaction. She nodded, winked, and went through a little pantomime of ecstacy, to the intense delight of the children, who were in the secret, and nodded and winked with her. 'Clean shirt?' she called back again, as if not understanding.

'My Sunday shirt ain't here.'

'You haven't got no Sunday shirt to-day.'

Andrew Brumm descended the stairs in consternation. 'No Sunday shirt!' he repeated.

'No shirt, nor no collar, nor no hankercher,' coolly affirmed Mrs. Brumm. 'There ain't none ironed. They be all in the wet and the rough, wrapped up in a old towel. Jacky and Polly haven't got nothing neither.'

Brumm stared considerably. 'Why, what's the meaning o' that?'

'The irons was in pawn,' shortly answered Mrs. Brumm. 'You know you never came home with the money, so I couldn't get 'em out.'

Another wordy war. Andrew protested she had no 'call' to put the irons in any such place. She impudently retorted that she should put the house in if she liked.

A hundred such little episodes could be related of the domestic life of Honey Fair.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MESSRS. BANKES.

On the Monday morning, a troop of the gloveress girls flocked into Charlotte East's. They were taking holiday, as was usual with them on Mondays. Charlotte was a favourite. It is true, she 'bothered' them, as they called it, with good advice, but they liked her, in spite of it. Charlotte's kitchen was always tidy and peaceful, with a bright fire burning in it: other kitchens would be full of turmoil and dirt. Charlotte never let them hinder her; she worked away at her gloves all the time. Charlotte was a glove-maker; that is, she sewed the fingers together, and put in the thumbs, forgits, and quirks. Look at your own gloves, English make. The long strips, running up inside the fingers, are the forgits; and the little pieces between, where the fingers open, are the quirks. The gloves Charlotte was occupied on now, were of a very dark green colour, almost black, called corbeau in the trade, and they were sewn with white silk. Charlotte's stitches were as

beautifully regular as though she had used a patent machine. The white silk and the fellow glove to the one she was making, lay inside a clean white handkerchief doubled upon her lap; other gloves, equally well covered, were in a basket at her side.

The girls had come in noisily, with flushed cheeks and eager eyes. Charlotte saw that something was exciting them. They liked to tell her of their little difficulties and pleasures. Betsy Carter had informed her mother that there was going to be a 'party' at the Alhambra tea-gardens, if you remember; and this was the point of interest to-day. These 'Alhambra tea-gardens,' however formidable and perhaps suggestive the name, were very innocent in reality. They belonged to a quiet road-side inn, half a mile from the town, and comprised a large garden and extensive lawn. The view from them was beautiful; and many a party from Helstonleigh, far higher in the scale of society than these girls, would go there in summer to take tea and enjoy the view. A young, tall, handsome girl of eighteen had drawn her chair close to Charlotte's. She was the half-sister of Mark Mason, and had her home with him and his wife; supporting herself, after a fashion, by her work. But she was always in debt to them, and she and Mrs. Mark did not get along

well together. She wore a new shawl, and a straw bonnet trimmed with blue ribbons: and her dark hair fell in shining ringlets — as was the fashion then. Two other girls perched themselves on a table. They were sisters—Amelia and Mary Ann Cross; others placed themselves where they could. Somewhat light were they in manner, these girls; free in speech. Nothing farther. If an unhappy girl did, by mischance, turn out badly, or, as the expressive phrase had it, 'went wrong,' she was forthwith shunned, and shunned for ever. Whatever may have been the faults and failings prevailing in Honey Fair, this sort of wrong doing was not common amongst them.

'Why, Caroline, that is new!' exclaimed Charlotte East, alluding to the shawl.

Caroline Mason laughed. 'Is it not a beauty?' cried she. And, it may be remarked, that in speech and accent she was superior to some of the girls.

Charlotte took a corner of it in her hand. 'It must have cost a pound, at least,' she said. 'Is it paid for?'

Again Caroline laughed. 'Never you mind whether it's paid for, or not, Charlotte. You won't be called upon for the money for it. Like I told my sister-in-law yesterday.'

'You did not want it, Caroline; and I am quite

sure you could not afford it. Your winter cloak was good yet. It is so bad a plan, the getting of goods on credit. I wish those Bankes's had never come near the place!'

'Don't you run down Bankes's, Charlotte East,' interposed Eliza Tyrrett, a very plain girl, with an ill-natured expression of face. 'We should never get along at all if it wasn't for Bankes's.'

'You would get along all the better,' returned Charlotte. 'How much are they going to charge you for this shawl, Caroline?'

Caroline and Eliza Tyrrett exchanged peculiar glances. There appeared to be some secret between them, connected with the shawl. 'Oh, a pound, or so,' replied Caroline. 'What was it, Eliza?'

Eliza Tyrrett burst into a loud laugh, and Caroline echoed it. Charlotte East did not press for the solution. But she did press the matter against dealing with Bankes's; as she had pressed it many a time before.

A twelvemonth previously, some strangers had opened a linen-draper's shop in a back street of Helstonleigh; brothers, of the name of Bankes. They professed to do business upon credit, and to wait upon people at their own homes, after the fashion of hawkers. Every Monday would one of them appear in Honey Fair, a great pack of goods

on his back, which would be opened for inspection at each house. Caps, shawls, gown-pieces, calico, flannel, and finery would be displayed in all their fascinations. Now, ladies, you who are reading this, only reflect on the temptation! Suppose Halling, Pierce, and Stone (or any other house you may think of) brought their wares to your residence every week, and laid them out on your dining-room table, right before your longing eyes, and said, 'Choose what you please, madam, and pay us at your own convenience.' I am not given to insinuation; but I do think it possible that even you might run up a score. The women of Honey Fair did; and it was three parts the work of their lives to keep the finery, and the system, and the debt, from the knowledge of their husbands.

'Pay us so much weekly off the debt,' Bankes's would say. And the women did so: it was like (apparently) getting a gown for nothing. But Bankes's were found to be strict in collecting the instalments; and how these weekly payments told upon the wages, I'll leave you to judge. Some would have many shillings to pay weekly. Charlotte East, and a few more prudent ones, spoke against this system; but they produced no impression. The temptation was too great. Charlotte assumed that this was how Caroline Mason's shawl

had been obtained. In that, however, she was mistaken.

'Charlotte, we are a-going down to Bankes's. There'll be a better choice in his shop than in his pack. You have heard of the party at the Alhambra. Well, it is to be next Monday, and we want to ask you what we shall wear. What 'ud you advise us to get for it?'

'Get nothing,' replied Charlotte. 'Don't go to Bankes's, and don't go to the Alhambra.'

The whole lot sat in wonder, with open eyes. 'Not go to the party!' echoed pert Amelia Cross. 'What next, Charlotte East?'

'I told you what it would be, if you came into Charlotte East's,' said Eliza Tyrrett, a sneer on her countenance.

'I am not against proper amusement, though I don't much care for it myself,' said Charlotte. 'But when you speak of going to a party at the Alhambra, somehow it does not sound respectable.'

The girls opened their eyes wider. 'Why, Charlotte, what harm do you suppose will come to us? We can take care of ourselves, I hope?'

'It is not that,' said Charlotte. 'Of course you can. Still it does not sound nice. It is like going to a public-house — you can't call the Alhambra anything else. It is quite different,

this, from going there to have tea in the summer. But that's not it, I say. If you go to it, you would be running in debt for all sorts of things at Bankes's, and get into trouble.'

'My sister-in-law says you are a croaker, Charlotte; and she's right,' cried Caroline Mason, with good humour.

'Charlotte, it is not a bit of use, your talking,' broke in Mary Ann Cross, vehemently. 'We shall go to the party, and we shall buy new things for it. Bankes's have got some lovely sarcenets, cross-barred; green, and pink, and lilac; and me and 'Melia means to have a dress apiece off 'em. With a pink bow in front, and a white collar—my! wouldn't folks stare at us!—Twelve yards each it would take, and they are one-and-eightpence a yard.'

'Mary Ann, it would be just madness! There'd be the making, the lining, and the ribbon—five or six-and-twenty shillings each, they would cost you. Pray don't!'

'How you do reckon things up, Charlotte! We should pay off weekly: we have got time afore us.'

'What would your father say?'

'Charlotte, you just hold your noise about father,' quickly returned Amelia Cross in a hushed and altered tone. 'You know we don't tell him about the Bankes's.'

Charlotte found she might as well have talked to the winds. The girls were bent upon the evening's pleasure, and also upon the smart things they deemed necessary for it. A few minutes more, and they quitted her; and trooped down to the shop of the Messrs. Bankes.

Charlotte was coming home that evening from an errand to the town, when she met Adam Thornycroft. He was somewhat above the common run of workmen.

'Oh, is it you, Charlotte?' he exclaimed, stopping her. 'I say, how is it that you'll never have anything to say to me now?'

'I have told you why, Adam,' she replied.

'You have told me a pack of nonsense. I'd not lose you, Charlotte, to be made king of England. When once we are married, you shall see how steady I'll be. I will not enter a public-house.'

'You have been saying that you will not for these twelve months past, Adam,' she sadly rejoined; and, had her face been perceptible in the dark night, he would have seen that it was working with agitation.

'What does it hurt a man, to go out and take a quiet pipe and a glass, after his work's over? Everybody does it.'

'Everybody does not. But I do not wish to

contend. It seems to bring you no conviction. Half the miseries around us in Honey Fair arise from so much of the wages being wasted at the public-houses. I know what you would say—that the wives are in fault as well. So they are. I do not believe people were sent into the world to live as so many of us live: nothing but scuffle, and discomfort, and—I may almost say it—sinfulness. One of these wretched households shall never be mine.'

'My goodness, Charlotte! How seriously you speak!'

'It is a serious subject. I want to try to live so as to do my duty by myself and by those around me; to pass my days in peace with the world and with conscience. A woman, beaten down, cowed with all sorts of ills, could not do so; and, where the husband is unsteady, she must be beaten down. Adam, you know it is not with a willing heart I give you up, but I am forced to it.'

'How can you bring yourself to say this to me?' he rejoined.

'I don't deny that it is hard,' she faintly said, suppressing with difficulty her emotion. 'This many a week I and duty have been having a conflict with each other: but duty has got the better. I knew it would, from the first——'

'Duty be smothered!' interrupted Adam Thornycroft. 'I shall think you a born natural presently, Charlotte.'

'Yes, I know. I can't help it. Adam, we should never pull together, you see. Good-bye. We can be friends in future, if you like; nothing more.'

She held out her hand to him for a parting salutation. Adam, hurt and angry, flung it from him, and turned towards Helstonleigh. Charlotte continued her way home, her tears dropping in the dusky night.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HARD TO BEAR!

MRS. HALLIBURTON struggled on. A struggle, my reader, that it is to be hoped, for your comfort's sake, you have never experienced, and never will. She had learnt the stitch for the back of the gloves, and Mr. Lynn supplied her with a machine, and with work. But she could not do it quickly yet awhile; though it was a hopeful day for her when she found that her weekly earnings amounted to six shillings.

Mrs. Reece paid her twenty shillings weekly. Or, rather, Dobbs: for Dobbs was paymaster-general. Of that, Jane could use (she had made a nice calculation) six shillings, putting by the fourteen for rent and taxes. Her taxes were very light, part of them being paid by the landlord, as was the custom with some houses in Helstonleigh. But for this, the fixed rent would have been less. Sorely tempted as she was, by hunger, by cold, almost by starvation, Jane was resolute in leaving the fourteen shillings intact. She had suffered too

much from non-payment of the last rent, not to be prepared with the next. But—the endurance and the deprivation!—how great they were! And she suffered far more for her children than for herself.

One night, towards the middle of February, she felt very down-hearted: almost as if she could not much longer struggle on. With her own earnings and the six shillings abstracted from Mrs. Reece's money she could count little more than twelve shillings weekly, and everything had to be found out of it. Coals, candles, washing—that is, the soap, firing, &c., necessary for Miss Betsy Carter to do it with; the boys' shoe mending, and other trifles. You will not, therefore, be surprised to hear that on this night they had literally nothing in the house but part of a loaf of bread. Jane was resolute in one thing—not to go in debt. Mrs. Buffle would have given credit, probably other shops also; but Jane believed that her sole chance of surmounting the struggle eventually, was by keeping debt away, even trifling debt. They had, on this morning, eaten bread for breakfast; they had eaten potatoes and salt for dinner; and now, tea-time, there was bread again. All Jane had in her pocket was two-pence, which must be kept for milk for the following morning so they were drinking water now.

They were round the fire; two of the boys kneeling on the ground to get the better blaze; thankful that they had a fire to be round. Their lessons were over for the day. William had been thoroughly well brought on by his father, in Greek, Latin, Euclid, and in English generally—in short, in the branches necessary to a good education. Frank and Gar were forward also; indeed, Frank, for his age, was a very good Latin scholar. But how could they do much good, or make much progress of themselves? William helped his brothers on as well as he could, but it was somewhat profitless work; and Jane was all too conscious that they needed to be at school. Altogether, her heart was sore within her.

Another thing was beginning to worry her—the fear lest her brother should not be able to send the rent. She had fully counted upon it; but, now that the time of its promised receipt was at hand, fears and doubts arose to her. She was dwelling on it now—now, as she sat there at her work, in the drawing-on dusk of the early spring evening. If the money did not come, all she could do would be to go to Mr. Ashley, tell him of her ill-luck, and that he must take the things at last. They must turn out, wanderers on the wide earth; no——

A plaintive cry interrupted her dream, and re-

called her to reality. It came from Jane, who was seated on a stool, her head leaning against the side of the mantel-piece.

'She is crying, mamma,' cried quick Frank; and Janey whispered something into Frank's ear, the cry deepening into sobs.

'Mamma, she's crying because she's hungry.'

'Janey, dear, I have nothing but bread. You know it. Could you eat a bit?'

'I want something else,' sobbed Janey. 'Some meat, or some pudding. It is such a long while since we had any. I am tired of bread; I am very hungry.'

There came an echoing cry from the other side of the fire-place. Gar had laid his head down on the floor, and he now broke out, sobbing also.

'I am hungry, too. I don't like bread any more than Janey does. When shall we have something nice?'

Jane gathered them to her, one in each arm, soothing them with soft caresses, her heart aching, her own sobs choked down, one single comfort present to her—that God knew what she had to bear.

Almost she began to fear for her own health. Would the intense anxiety, combined with the want of sufficient food, tell upon her? Would her sleepless nights tell upon her? Would her grief

for the loss of her husband—a grief not the less keenly felt because she did not parade it—tell upon her? All *that* lay in the future.

She rose the next morning early to her work; she always had to rise early—the boys and Jane setting the breakfast. The breakfast! Putting the bread upon the table and taking in the milk. For twopence they got a quart of skimmed milk, and were glad to get it. Her head was heavy, her frame hot, the result of inward fever, her limbs were tired before the day began; worse than all, there was that utter weariness of mind which predisposes a sufferer from it to lie down and die. 'This will never do,' thought Jane; 'I *must* bear up.'

A dispute between Frank and Gar! They were good, affectionate boys; but little tempers must break out now and then. In trying to settle it, Jane burst into tears. It put an end to the fray more effectually than anything else could have done. The boys looked blank with consternation, and Janey burst into hysterical sobs.

'Don't, Jane, don't,' said the poor mother; 'I am not well; but do not *you* cry.'

'I am not well, either,' sobbed Janey. 'It hurts me here, and here.' She put her hand to her head and chest, and Jane knew that she was weak from a long-continued insufficiency of food.

There was no remedy. Jane only wished she could bear for them all.

Some time after breakfast there came the postman's knock at the door. A thickish letter—twopence to pay. The penny postal system had come in, but letters were not so universally prepaid then as they are now.

Jane glanced over it with a beating heart. Yes; it was the handwriting of her brother. Could the promised rent have really arrived? She felt sick with agitation.

'I have no money at all, Frank. Ask Dobbs if she will lend you twopence.'

Away went Frank, in his quick and not very ceremonious manner, penetrating to the kitchen, where Dobbs happened to be. 'Dobbs, will you please to lend mamma twopence? It is for a letter.'

'Dobbs, indeed! Who's "Dobbs?"' retorted that functionary in wrath. 'I am Mrs. Dobbs, if you please. Take yourself out of my sight till you can learn manners.'

'Won't you lend it? The postman's waiting.'

'No, I won't,' returned Dobbs.

Back ran Frank. 'She won't lend it, mamma. She says I was rude to her, and called her Dobbs.'

'Oh, Frank!' But the postman was impatient, calling out to know whether he was to be kept

there all day. Jane was fain to apply to Dobbs herself, and procured the loan. Then she ran up stairs with the letter, and her trembling fingers broke the seal. Two bank-notes, for 10*l.* each, fell out of it. The promised loan had been sixteen pounds. The Rev. Francis Tait had contrived to spare four pounds more.

Before Jane had recovered from her excitement —almost before a breath of thanks had gone up from her heart—she saw Mr. Ashley on the opposite side of the road, going towards Helstonleigh. Being in no state to weigh her actions, only conscious that the two notes lay in her hand—actual realities—she threw on her bonnet and shawl, and went across the road to Mr. Ashley. In her agitation, she scarcely knew what she did or said.

'Oh, sir—I beg your pardon—but I have this moment received the money for the back rent. May I give it to you now?'

Mr. Ashley looked at her in surprise. A scarlet spot shone on her thin cheeks—a happy excitement was spread over her face of care. He read the indications plainly—that she was an eager payer, but no willing debtor. The open letter in her hand, and the postman opposite, told the tale.

'There is no such hurry, Mrs. Halliburton,' said he, smiling. 'I cannot give you a receipt here.'

'You can send it to me,' she said. 'I would rather pay you than Mr. Dare.'

She held out the notes to him. He felt in his pocket whether he had sufficient change, found he had, and handed it to her. 'That is it, madam—four sovereigns. Thank you.'

She took them hesitatingly, but did not close her hand. 'Was there not some expense incurred when—when that man was put in?'

'Not for you to pay, Mrs. Halliburton,' he pointedly returned. 'I hope you are getting pretty well through your troubles?'

The tears came into her eyes, and she turned them away. Getting pretty well through her troubles! 'Thank you for inquiring,' she meekly said. 'I shall, I believe, have the quarter's rent ready in March, when it falls due.'

'Do not put yourself out of the way to pay it,' he replied. 'If it would be more convenient to you to let it go on to the half year, it would be the same to me.'

Her heart rose to the kindness. 'Thank you, Mr. Ashley, thank you very much for your consideration; but I must pay as I go on, if I possibly can.'

Patience stood at her gate, smiling, as Jane recrossed the road. She had seen what passed.

'Thee hast good news, I see. But thee wert in a hurry, to pay thy rent in the road.'

'My brother has sent me the rent, and four pounds over it. Patience, I can buy the bed-side carpets now.'

Patience looked pleased. 'With all thy riches, thee will scarcely thank me for this poor three and sixpence,' holding out the silver to her. 'Samuel Lynn left it; it is owing thee for thy work.'

Jane smiled sadly as she took it. Her riches! 'How is Anna?' she asked.

'She is nicely, thank thee, and is gone to school. But she was wilful over her lessons this morning. Farewell. I am glad thee art so far out of thy perplexities.'

Very far, indeed; and a great relief it was. Can you realize these troubles of Mrs. Halliburton's? Not, I think, as she realized them. We pity the trials and endurance of the poor; but, believe me, they are as nothing compared to the bitter lot of reduced gentlepeople. Jane had not been brought up to poverty, to scant and hard fare, to labour, to humiliations, to the pain of debt. But for hope —and some of us know how strong that is in the human heart—and for that better hope, *trust*, Jane never could have got through her trials. The physical privations alone were nearly too hard to bear. Can you wonder that an unexpected present of four pounds seemed like a sea of riches?

CHAPTER XXV.

INCIPIENT VANITY.

But, four pounds, however large a sum to look at, dwindles down sadly in the spending; especially when bed-side carpets, and boys' boots—new ones, and the mending of old—have to be abstracted from it at the commencement. An idea had for some time been looming in Jane's mind; looming ominously, for she did not like to speak of it. It was, that William must go out, and enter upon some mode of employment, by which a little weekly money might be added to their stock. He was eager enough; indulging, no doubt, boy like, some peculiar visions of his own, great and grand. But these Jane had to dispel; to explain that for young boys, like him, the earning of money implied hard work.

His face flushed scarlet. Jane drew him to her, and pressed her cheek down upon his.

'There would be no real disgrace in it, my darling. No work, in itself, brings disgrace; be it the carrying abroad of parcels, be it the sweep-

ing out of a shop. So long as we retain our refine ment of speech, of manner, our courteous conduct one to the other, we shall still be gentlepeople, let us work at what we may. William, I think it is your *duty* to help in our need.'

'Yes, I see, mamma,' he answered. 'I will try and do it; anything that may turn up.'

Jane had not much faith in things 'turning up. She believed that they must be sought for. That same evening she went into Mr. Lynn's, with the view of asking his counsel. There she found Anna in trouble. The cause was as follows:—

Patience, leaving Anna alone at her lessons, had gone into the kitchen to give some directions to Grace. Anna seized the opportunity to take a little recreation: not that it was greatly needed, for—spoilt child that she was!—she had merely looked on her books with vacant eyes, not having in reality learned a single word. First of all, off went her cap. Next, she drew from her pocket a small mirror, about the size of a five shilling piece. Propping this against her books on the table before her, so that the lamp's rays might fall upon it, she proceeded to admire herself, and twist her flowing hair round her pretty fingers, to make a shower of ringlets. Sad vanity for a little born quakeress! But it must be owned that never did mirror, small or large, give back a more lovely

image than that child's. She had just arranged the curls, and was contemplating their effect to her entire satisfaction, when back came Patience, sooner than she was looked for, and caught the young lady at her impromptu toilette. What with the curls and what with the mirror, Anna did not know which to scuffle away first.

'Thee naughty child! thee naughty, naughty child! What is to become of thee? Where did thee get this?'

Anna burst into tears. In her perplexity she said she had 'found' the mirror.

'That thee did not,' said Patience, calmly. 'I ask thee where thee got it from?'

Of a remarkably pliable nature, wavering and timid, Anna never withstood long the persistent questioning of Patience. Amid many tears, the truth came out. Lucy Dixon had brought it to school in her workbox. It was a doll's mirror, and she, Anna, had given her sixpence for it.

'The sixpence that thy father bestowed upon thee yesterday for being a good girl,' retorted Patience. 'I told him thee would likely not make a profitable use of it. Come up to bed with thee! I will talk to thee after thee are in it.'

Of all things, Anna disliked to be sent to bed before her time. She sobbed, expostulated, and

promised all sorts of amendment for the future. Patience, firm and quiet, would have carried her point, but for the entrance of Samuel Lynn. The fault was related to him by Patience, and the mirror exhibited. Anna clung around him in a storm of sobs.

'Dear father!—dear, dear father, don't thee let me go to bed! Let me sit by thee while thee has thy supper. Patience may keep the glass, but don't thee let me go.'

It was quite a picture—the child clinging there with her crimsoned cheeks, her wet eyelashes, and her soft, flowing hair. Samuel Lynn, albeit a man not given to demonstration, strained her to him with a loving movement. Perhaps the crime of looking in a doll's glass, and toying with her hair, appeared to him more venial than it did to Patience; but then, she was his beloved child. 'Will thee transgress again, Anna?'

'No, I never will,' sobbed Anna.

'Then Patience will suffer thee to sit up this once. But thee must be careful.'

He placed her in a chair close to him. Patience, disapproving very much, but saying nothing, left the room. Grace appeared with the supper tray, and a message that Patience would take her supper in the kitchen. It was at this juncture that Mrs. Halliburton came in. She told the

Quaker that she had come to consult him about William; and mentioned her intentions.

'To tell thee the truth, friend, I have marvelled much that thee did not, under thy circumstances, seek to place out thy eldest son,' was the answer. 'He might be helping thee.'

'He is young to earn anything, Mr. Lynn. Do you see a chance of my getting him a place?'

'That depends, friend, upon the sort of place he may wish for. I could help him to a place to-morrow. But it is one that may not accord with thy notions.'

'What is it?' eagerly asked Jane.

'It is in Thomas Ashley's manufactory. We are in want of another boy, and the master told me to-day I had better inquire for one.'

'What would he have to do?' asked Jane. 'And what would he earn?'

'He would have to do anything he may be directed to do. Thy son is older than are our boys, who come to us ordinarily, and he has been differently brought up; therefore I might put him to somewhat better employment. He might also be paid a trifle more. They sweep and dust, go on out-door errands, carry messages in-doors, black the gloves, get in coal; and they earn, if they are sharp, half-a-crown a-week.'

Jane's heart sank within her.

'But thy son, I say, might be treated somewhat differently. Not that he must be above doing any of these duties, should he be put to them. I can assure thee, friend, that some of the first manufacturers of this town have thus begun their career. A thoroughly practical knowledge of the business is only to be acquired by beginning at the first step of the ladder, and working upwards.'

'Did Mr. Ashley so begin?' She could scarcely tell why she put the question. Unless it was that a feeling came over her that if Mr. Ashley had done these things, she would not mind William's doing them.

'No, friend. Thomas Ashley's father was a man of good means, and Thomas was bred up a classical scholar and a gentleman. He has never taken a practical part in the working of the business: I do that for him. His labours are chiefly confined to the correspondence and the keeping of the books. His father wished him to embrace a profession, rather than to be a glove manufacturer: but Thomas preferred to succeed his father. If thee would like thy son to enter our manufactory, I will try him.'

Jane was dubious. She felt quite sure that William would not like it. 'He has been thinking of a counting-house, or a lawyer's or conveyancer's office,' she said aloud. 'He would like

to employ his time in writing. Would there be a difficulty in getting him into one?'

'I do not opine a lawyer would take a boy of his size. They require their writing to be well and correctly done. About that, I cannot tell thee much, for I have nothing to do with lawyers. He can inquire.'

Jane rose. She stood by the table, unconsciously stroking Anna's shining curls—for the cap had never been replaced, and Samuel Lynn found no fault with the omission. 'I will speak candidly,' said Jane. 'I fear that the place you have kindly offered me would not be liked by William. Other employments, writing for example, would be more palatable. Nevertheless, were he unable to obtain anything else, I should be glad to accept this. Will you give me three or four days for consideration?'

'To oblige thee, I will, friend. When Thomas Ashley gives orders, he is prompt in having them attended to; and he spoke, as I have informed thee, about a fresh boy to-day. Would it not be a help to thee, friend, if thee got thy other two boys into the school attached to the cathedral?'

'But I have no interest,' said Jane. 'I hear that the education there is free; but I do not possess the slightest chance.'

'Thee may get a chance, friend. There's nothing like trying. I must tell thee that the school is not thought highly of, in consequence of the instruction being confined exclusively to Latin and Greek. In the old days this was thought enough; but people are now getting more enlightened. Thomas Ashley was educated there; but he had a private tutor at home for the branches not taught at the college; he had also masters for what are called accomplishments. Few men of his day were so thoroughly and comprehensively educated as was Thomas Ashley. I have heard say thy sons have begun Latin. It might be a help to them, if they could get in.'

'I should desire nothing better,' Jane breathlessly rejoined, a new hope penetrating to her heart. 'I have heard of the collegiate school here; but, until very recently, I supposed it to be an expensive institution.'

'No, friend; it is free. The best way to get a boy in, is by making interest with the head-master of the school, or with some of the cathedral clergy.'

A recollection of Mr. Peach flashed into Jane's mind like a ray of light. She bade good night to Samuel Lynn and Anna, and to Patience as she passed the kitchen. Patience had been crying.

'I am grieved about Anna,' she explained. 'I

love the child dearly, but Samuel Lynn is blind to her faults; and it argues badly for the future. Thee cannot imagine half her vanity; I fear me, too, she is deceitful. I wish her father could see it! I wish he would indulge her less, and correct her more! Good-night to thee.'

Before concluding the chapter, it may as well be mentioned that a piece of good fortune about this time befel Janey. She found favour with Dobbs! How it came about, perhaps Dobbs could not herself have told. Certainly nobody else could.

Mrs. Reece had got in the habit of asking Jane into her parlour to tea. She was a kind-hearted old lady, and liked the child. Dobbs would afterwards be at work, generally some patching and mending of her own clothes; and Dobbs, though she would not acknowledge it, to herself or to anybody else, could not see to thread her needle. The needle in one hand and the thread in the other, she would poke the two together for five minutes, no result supervening. Janey hit upon the plan of threading her a needle in silence, while Dobbs used the one; and from that time Jane kept her in threaded needles. Whether this mollified Dobbs, must remain a mystery, but she took a liking for Jane; and the liking grew into love. Henceforth Janey wanted for nothing. While

the others starved, she lived on the fat of the land. Meat and pudding, fowls and pastry, whatever the dinner in the parlour might consist of, Janey had her share of it, and a full share too. At first Mrs. Halliburton, from motives of delicacy, would not allow Jane to go in; upon which Dobbs would enter, boiling over with indignation, red with the exertion of cooking, and triumphantly bear her off. Jane spoke seriously to Mrs. Reece about it, but the old lady declared she was as glad to have the child as Dobbs was.

Once, Janey came to a stand-still over some apple pudding, which had followed upon veal cutlets and bacon. 'I am quite full,' said she, with more plainness than politeness; 'I can't eat a bit more. May I give this piece upon my plate to Gar?'

'No, you may not,' snapped Dobbs, drowning Mrs. Reece's words that she might give it, and welcome. 'How dare you, Janey? You know that boys is the loadstones of my life.'

Dobbs probably used the word loadstones to imply a heavy weight. She seized hold of the plate of pudding, and finished it herself, lest it should find its way to the indicated quarter—a self-sacrifice which served to show her earnestness

in the cause. Nothing gave Dobbs indigestion like apple pudding, and she knew she should be a martyr for four-and-twenty hours afterwards.

Thus Jane, at least, suffered from henceforth no privations, and Mrs. Halliburton was very thankful. The time was to come, however, when she would have cause to be more so.

CHAPTER XXVI.

MR. ASHLEY'S MANUFACTORY.

THE happy thought, suggested by Samuel Lynn, Jane carried out. She applied in person to Mr. Peach, and he obtained an immediate entrance for Frank to the college school, with a promise for Gar to enter at the quarter day, the 25th of March. He was perfectly thunderstruck when he found that his old friend and tutor, Mr. Halliburton, was dead; had died in Helstonleigh; and that he—*he!*—had buried him. There was no need to ask him twice, after that, to exert his interest for the fatherless children. The school (I have told you that it was many years ago) was not held in the highest repute, from the cause spoken of by Samuel Lynn; vacancies were often occurring, and admission was easy. It was one great weight off Jane's mind.

William was not so fortunate. He was at that period very short of his age, timid in manner, and no office could be persuaded to take him. Nothing in the least congenial presented itself, or could be

found; and the result was, that he resigned himself to Samuel Lynn, who introduced him to Mr. Ashley's extensive manufactory—to be initiated by degrees into all the mysteries necessary to convert a skin into a glove. And, although his interest and curiosity were excited by what he saw, he pronounced it a 'hateful' business.

When the skins came in from the leather-dressers, they were washed in a tub of cold water. The next day warm water, mixed with yolks of eggs, was poured on them, and a couple of men, bare-legged to the knee, got into the tub, and danced on them, skins, and eggs, and water, for two hours. Then they were spread in a field to dry, till they were as hard as lantern horn; then they were 'staked,' as it was called, a long process, to smooth and soften them. To the stainers next, to be stained black or coloured; next to the parers, to have the loose flesh pared from the inside, and to be smoothed again with pumice-stone—all of this being done on the outside premises. Then they came inside, to the hands of one of the foremen, who sorted and marked them for the cutters. The cutters cut the skins into tranks (the shape of the hand in outline) with the separate thumbs and forgits, and sent them into the slitters. The slitters slit the four fingers, and *shaped* the thumbs and forgits: after that, they

were ready for the women: three different women, you may remember, being necessary to turn out each glove, so far as the sewing went; for one woman rarely worked at more than her own peculiar branch, or was capable of working at it. This done, and back in the manufactory again, they had to be pulled straight, and 'padded,' or rubbed, a process by which they were brightened. If black gloves, the seams were washed over with a black dye, or else glazed; then they were hung up to dry. This done, they went into Samuel Lynn's room, a large room next to Mr. Ashley's private room, and here they were sorted into firsts, seconds, or thirds; the sorting being always done by Samuel Lynn, or by James Meeking, the head foreman. It was called 'making-up.' Next they were banded round with a paper, in dozens, labelled, and placed in small boxes, ready for the warehouses in London. A great deal, you see, before one pair of gloves can be turned out.

The first morning that William went at six o'clock with Samuel Lynn, he was ordered to light the fire in Mr. Ashley's room, sweep it out, and dust it, first of all sprinkling the floor with water from a watering-pot. And this was to be part of his work every morning at present; Samuel Lynn giving him strict charge never to disturb anything on Mr. Ashley's desk. If he

moved things to dust the desk, he was to lay them down again in the same places and in the same position. The duster consisted of some leather shreds tied up into a knot, the ends hanging. He found he should have to wait on Mr. Ashley and Samuel Lynn, bring things they wanted, carry messages to the men, and go out when sent. A pair of shears, which he could not manage, was put into his hand, and he had to cut a damaged skin, useless for gloves, into narrow strips, standing at one of the counters in Samuel Lynn's room. William wondered whether they were to make another duster; but he found they were used in the manufactory in place of string. That done, a round, polished stick was handed to him, tapered at either end, which he had to pass over and over some small gloves to make them smooth, after the manner of a cook rolling out paste for a pie. He looked with dismay at the two young errand boys of the establishment, who were black with dye. But Samuel Lynn had distinctly told him that he would not be expected to place himself on their level. The rooms were mostly very light, one or two sides being entirely of glass.

On the evening of this first day, William, after he got home, sat there in sad heaviness. His mother asked how he liked his employment, and he returned an evasive answer. Presently he

rose to go to bed, saying he had the head-ache. Up he went to the garret, and flung himself down on the mattress, sobbing as if his heart would break. Jane, suspecting something of this, followed him up. She caught him in her arms.

'Oh, my darling, don't give way! Things may grow brighter after a time.'

'It is such a dreadful change!—from my books, my Latin, and my Greek, to go there and sweep out places like those two black boys!' he said, hysterically, all his reticence gone.

'My dear boy! my darling boy! I know not how to reconcile you, how to lessen your cares. Your experience of the sorrow of life is beginning early. You are hungry, too.'

'I am always hungry,' answered William, quite unable to affect concealment in that hour of grief. 'I heard one of those black boys say he had boiled pork and greens for dinner. I did so envy him.'

Jane checked her tears; they were rising rebelliously. 'William, darling, your lot seems just now very dark and painful, but it might be worse.'

'Worse!' he echoed in surprise. 'How could it be worse? Mamma, I am no better than an errand boy there.'

'It would be worse, William, if you were one of those poor black boys. No enlightenment; no

wish for elevation; content to remain as they are for ever.'

'But that could never be,' he urged. 'To be content with such a life is impossible.'

'They are content, William.'

He saw the drift of the argument. 'Yes, mamma,' he acknowledged, 'I did not reflect. It would be worse if I were quite as they are.'

'William, we can only bear our difficulties, and make the best of them, trusting to surmount them in the end. You and I must both do this. Trust is different from hope. If we only hope, we may lose our courage; but if we fully and freely *trust*, we cannot. Patience and perseverance, endurance and trust, they will in the end triumph; never fear. If I feared, William, I should go into the grave with despair. I never lose my trust. I never lose my conviction, firm and certain, that God is watching over me, that He is permitting these trials for some wise purpose, and that in His own good time we shall be brought through them.'

William's sobs were growing lighter.

'The time may come when we shall be at ease again,' continued Jane; 'when we shall look back on this time of trial, and be thankful that we did bear up and surmount it, instead of fainting under the burthen. God will take care that the battle is

not too hot for us, if we only resign ourselves, in all trust, to do the best. The future is grievously dim and indistinct. As the guiding light in your papa's dream shone only on one step at a time, so can I see but one step before me.'

'What step is that?' he asked, somewhat eagerly.

'The one obvious step before me is to persevere, as I am now doing, to try and retain this home for you, my children; to work as I can, so as to keep you around me. I must strive to keep you together, and you must help me. Bear up bravely, William. Make the best of this unpleasant employment and its mortifications, and strive to overcome your repugnance to it. Be resolute, my boy, in doing your duty in it, because it is your duty, and because, William—because it is helping your mother.'

A shadow of the trust, so firm in his mother's heart, began dawning in his. 'Yes, it is my duty,' he resolutely said. 'I will try to do it—to hope and trust.'

Jane strained him to her. 'Were you and I to give way now, darling, our past troubles would have been borne for nothing. Let us, I repeat, look forward to the time when we may say, "We did not faint; we battled on, and overcame." It *will* come, William. Only trust to God.'

She quitted him, leaving him to reflection and resolve scarcely befitting his young years.

The week wore on to its close. On the Saturday night, William, his face flushed, held out four shillings to his mother. 'My week's wages, mamma.'

Jane's cheek flushed too. 'It is more than I expected, William,' she said. 'I fancied you would have three.'

'I think the master fixed the sum,' said William.

'The master? Do you mean Mr. Ashley?'

'We never say "Mr. Ashley" in the manufactory; we say "the master." Mr. Lynn was paying the wages to-night. I heard them say that sometimes Mr. Lynn paid them, and sometimes James Meeking. Those two black boys have half-a-crown a-piece. He left me to the last, and when the rest were gone, he looked at me and took up three shillings. Then he seemed to hesitate, and suddenly he locked the desk and went into the master's room, and spoke with him. He came back in a minute, unlocked the desk, and gave me four shillings. "Thee hast not earned it," he said, "but I think thee has done thy best. Thee will have the same each week, so long as thee does so."'

Jane held the four shillings and felt that she was getting quite rich. The rest crowded round

to look. 'Can't we have a nice dinner to-morrow with it?' said one.

'I think we must,' said Jane, cheerily. 'A nice dinner, for once in a way. What shall it be?'

'Roast beef,' called out Frank.

'Some pork with crackling,' suggested Janey. 'That of Mrs. Reece's yesterday was so good.'

'Couldn't we have two fowls and a jam pudding?' asked Gar.

Jane smiled and kissed him. All the suggestions were beyond her purse. 'We will have a nice meat pudding,' she said; 'that's best.' And the children cheerfully acquiesced. They had implicit faith in their mother; they knew that what she said was best, would be best.

On this same Saturday night Charlotte East was returning home from Helstonleigh, an errand having taken her thither after dark. Nearly opposite to the turning to Honey Fair, a lane branched off, leading to some farm-houses; a lane, green and pleasant in summer, but bare and uninviting now. Two people turned into it as Charlotte looked across. She caught but a glance; but something in the aspect of both struck upon her sight as familiar. A gas lamp at the lane's corner shed a light upon the spot, and Charlotte suddenly halted, and stood, endeavouring to peer further. But they were soon beyond her view. A feeling of dismay

had stolen over Charlotte. She hoped she was mistaken, that the parties were not those she had fancied; and she slowly continued her way. A few paces more, she turned up the road leading to Honey Fair, and found herself nearly knocked over by one who came running against her, apparently in some excitement, and in a great hurry.

'Who's this?' cried the voice of Eliza Tyrrett. 'Charlotte East, I declare! I say, have you seen anything of Caroline Mason?'

Charlotte hesitated. She hoped she had not seen her; though the misgiving was upon her that she had. 'Did you think I might have seen her?' she returned. 'Has she come this way?'

'Yes, I expect she has come this way, and I want to find her,' returned Eliza Tyrrett, vehemently. 'I saw her a making off out of Honey Fair, and I saw who was waiting for her round the corner. I knew my company wasn't wanted then, and I turned into Dame Buffle's for a talk; and there I found that Madam Carry have been telling falsehoods about me. Let me set on to her, that's all! I shall say what she won't like.'

'Who do you mean was waiting for her?' inquired Charlotte East.

Eliza Tyrrett laughed. She was beginning to recover her temper. 'You'd like to know, wouldn't

you?' said she, pertly. 'But I'm not a-going to tell tales out of school.'

'I think I do know,' returned Charlotte, quietly. 'I fear I do.'

'Do you? I thought nobody knew nothing about it but me. It have been going on this ten weeks. Did you see her, though, Charlotte?'

'I thought I saw her, but I could not believe my eyes. She was with—with—somebody that she has no business to be with.'

'Oh, as to business, I don't know about that,' carelessly answered Eliza Tyrrett. 'We have a right to walk with anybody we like.'

'Whether it is good or bad for you?' returned Charlotte.

'There's no "bad" in it,' cried Eliza Tyrrett, in an indignant tone. 'I never saw such an old maid as you are, Charlotte East; never! Carry Mason's not a child, to be led into mischief.'

'Carry's very foolish,' was Charlotte's comment.

'Oh, of course *you* think so, or it wouldn't be you. You'll go and tell upon her at home, I suppose, now.'

'I shall tell *her*,' said Charlotte. 'Folks should choose their acquaintances in their own class of life, if they want things to turn out pleasantly.'

'Were you not all took in, about that shawl!' uttered Eliza Tyrrett, with a laugh. 'You thought

she went in debt for it at Bankes's, and her people at home thought so. Het Mason shrieked on at her, like anything, for spending money on her back, while she owed it for her board. *He* give her that.'

'Eliza Tyrrett!'

'He did. Law, where's the harm? He is rich enough to give all us girls in Honey Fair one a-piece, and who'd be the worse for it? Only his pocket; and that can afford it. I wish he would!'

'I wish you would not talk so, Eliza Tyrrett. She is not a fit companion for him, even though it is but to take a walk; and she ought to remember that she is not.'

'He wants her for a longer companion nor that,' observed Eliza Tyrrett; 'that is, if he tells true. He wants her to marry him.'

'He—wants her to marry him!' repeated Charlotte, speaking the words in sheer amazement. 'Who says so?'

'He does. I should hardly think he can be in earnest, though.'

'Eliza Tyrrett, we cannot be speaking of the same person,' cried Charlotte, feeling bewildered. 'To whom have you been alluding?'

'To the same that you have, I expect. Young Anthony Dare.'

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE FORGOTTEN LETTER.

It was the last day of March, and five o'clock in the afternoon. The great bell had rung in the manufactory of Mr. Ashley, the signal for the men to go to their tea. Scuffling feet echoed to it, from all parts, and clattered down the stairs on their way out. The ground floor was not used for the in-door purposes of the manufactory, the business being carried on in the first and second floors. The first flight of stairs opened into what was called the serving-room, a very large apartment; through this, on the right, branched off Mr. Ashley's room and Samuel Lynn's. On the left, various passages led to other rooms, and the upper flight of stairs was opposite to the entrance stairs. The serving-counter, running completely across the room, made a barrier between the serving-room and the entrance stairs.

The men flocked into the serving-room, passed it, and scuttered down the stairs. Samuel Lynn

was changing his coat to follow, and William Halliburton was waiting for him, his cap on, for he walked to and fro with the Quaker, when Mr. Ashley's voice was heard from his room; the counting-house, as it was frequently called.

'William!' It was usual to distinguish the boys by their Christian name only; the men by their Christian and surnames joined. Samuel Lynn was 'Mr. Lynn.'

'Did thee not hear the master calling to thee?'

William had certainly heard Mr. Ashley's voice; but it was so unusual for him to be called by it, that he had paid no attention. He had very little communication with Mr. Ashley; in the three or four weeks he had now been at the manufactory, Mr. Ashley had not spoken to him a dozen words. He hastened into the counting-house, taking off his cap in the presence of Mr. Ashley.

'Are the men gone to tea?' inquired Mr. Ashley, who was sealing a letter.

'Yes, sir,' replied William.

'Is George Dance gone?' George Dance was an apprentice, and it was his business to take the letters to the post.

'They are all gone, sir, except Mr. Lynn; and James Meeking, who is waiting to lock up.'

'Do you know the post office?'

'Oh, yes, sir. It is in West Street, at the other end of the town.'

'Take this letter, and put it carefully in.'

William received the letter from Mr. Ashley, and dropped it into his jacket pocket. It was addressed to Bristol; the London mail-bags were already made up. Mr. Ashley put on his hat, and departed, followed by Samuel Lynn and William. James Meeking locked up, as it was his invariable business so to do, and carried the keys into his own house; he inhabiting part of the ground floor of the premises.

'Are thee not coming home with me this evening?' inquired Samuel Lynn of William, who was turning off the opposite way.

'No; the master has given me a letter to post. I have also an errand to do for my mother.'

It happened (things do happen in a curious sort of way in this world) that Mrs. Halliburton had desired William to bring her in some candles and soap at tea-time, and to purchase them at Lockett's shop. Lockett's shop was rather far; there were others nearer; but Lockett's goods were of the best quality, and their extensive trade enabled them to sell a halfpenny a pound cheaper. A halfpenny was a halfpenny with Jane then. William went on his way, walking fast.

As he was passing the cathedral, he came in

contact with the college boys, then just let out of school. It was the first day that Gar had joined, he having received his appointment, according to promise. Very thankful was Jane; in spite of the drawback of having to provide them with good linen surplices. William halted, to see if he could discern Gar amidst the throng: it was not unnatural that he should look for him.

One of the boys caught sight of William standing there. It was Cyril Dare, the third son of Mr. Dare, a boy older and considerably bigger than William.

'If there's not another of that Halliburton lot, posted there!' cried he, to a knot of those around. "Perhaps he will be coming amongst us next—because we have not enough with the two! Look at the fellow, staring at us! He is a common errand boy at Ashley's.'

Frank Halliburton, who, little as he was, wanted neither for spirit nor pluck, heard the words, and confronted Cyril Dare. 'That is my brother,' said he. 'What have you to say against him?'

Cyril Dare cast a glance of scorn on Frank, regarding him from top to toe. 'You audacious young puppy! I say he is a snob. There!'

'Then I say he is not,' retorted Frank. 'You are one yourself, for saying it.'

Cyril Dare, big enough to have crushed Frank

to death, speedily had him on the ground, and treated him not very mercifully when there. William, a witness to this, but not understanding it, pushed his way through the crowd to protect Frank. All he saw was, that Frank was down, and two big boys were kicking him.

'Let him alone!' cried he. 'How can you be so cowardly as to attack a little fellow? And two of you! Shame!'

Now, if there was one earthly thing that the college boys would not brook, it was the being interfered with by a stranger. William suffered. Frank's treatment had been nothing to what he had to submit to. He was knocked down, trampled on, kicked, buffeted, abused; Cyril Dare being the chief and primary aggressor. At that moment the master came in view, and the boys made off—all except Cyril Dare.

Reined in against the wall, at a few yards distance, was a lad on a pony. He had delicately expressive features, large soft brown eyes, a complexion too bright for health, and wavy dark hair. The face was beautiful; but two upright lines were indented into the white forehead, as if worn there by pain, and the one ungloved hand was white and thin. He was as old as William within a year; but, slight and fragile, would be taken to be much younger. Seeing and hearing—though

not very clearly—what had passed, he touched his pony, and rode up to Cyril Dare. The latter was beginning to walk away leisurely, in the wake of his companions: the upper boys were rather fond of ignoring the presence of the under master. Cyril turned at hearing himself called.

'What! Is it you, Henry Ashley? Where did you spring from?'

'Cyril Dare,' was the answer, 'you are a wretched coward.'

Cyril Dare was feeling anger yet, and the words did not mend it. 'Of course, *you* can say so!' he cried. 'You know that you can say what you like with impunity. One can't chastise a cripple like you.'

The brilliant, painful colour flushed into the face of Henry Ashley. To allude openly to infirmity, such as this, is as iron entering into the soul. Upon a sensitive, timid, refined nature (and those suffering from this sort of affliction are nearly sure to possess that nature), it falls with a bitterness that can neither be conceived by others nor spoken of by themselves. Henry Ashley braved it out.

'A coward, and a double coward!' he repeated, looking Cyril Dare full in the face, while the transparent flush grew hotter on his own. 'You struck a young boy down, and then kicked him;

and for nothing but that he stood up, like a trump, at your abuse of his brother.'

'You couldn't hear,' returned Cyril Dare, roughly.

'I heard sufficient. I say that you are a coward.'

'Chut! They are snobs, out-and-out.'

'I don't care if they are chimney-sweeps. It does not make you less a coward. And you'll be one as long as you live. If I had my strength, I'd serve you out as you served out them.'

'Ah, but you have not your strength, you know!' mocked Cyril. 'And as you seem to be going into one of your heroic fits, I shall make a start, for I have no time to waste on them.'

He tore away. Henry Ashley turned his pony and addressed William. Both boys had spoken rapidly, so that scarcely a minute had passed, and William had but just risen from the ground. He leaned against the wall, giddy, as he wiped the blood from his face. 'Are you much hurt?' asked Henry, kindly, his large dark eyes full of sympathy.

'No, thank you; it is nothing,' replied William. 'He is a great coward, though, whoever he is.'

'It is Cyril Dare,' called out Frank.

'Yes, it is Cyril Dare,' continued Henry Ashley. 'I have been telling him what a coward he is. I

am ashamed of him: he is my cousin, in a remote degree. I am glad you are not hurt.'

Henry Ashley rode away towards his home. Frank followed in the same direction; as did Gar, who now came in view. William proceeded up the town. He was a little hurt, although he had disclaimed it to Henry Ashley. His head felt light, his arms ached; perhaps the sensation of giddiness was as much from the want of a piece of bread as anything. He purchased what was required for his mother; and then made the best of his way home again. Mr. Ashley's letter had gone clean out of his head.

Frank, in the magnifying manner usual with boys, carried home so exaggerated a story of William's damages, that Jane expected to see him arrive half killed. Samuel Lynn heard of it, and said William might stop at home that evening. It has never been mentioned that his hours were from six till eight in the morning, from nine till one, from two till five, and from six till eight. These were Mr. Lynn's hours, and William was allowed to keep the same; the men had half an hour less at breakfast and tea time.

William was glad of the rest, after his battle, and the evening passed on. It was growing late, almost bed-time, when all in an instant there flashed into his memory Mr. Ashley's letter. He

put his hand into his jacket pocket. There it lay, snug and safe. With a few words of explanation to his mother, so hasty and incoherent that she did not comprehend a syllable, he snatched his cap, and flew away in the direction of the town.

Boys have good legs, good lungs; and William scarcely slackened speed until he gained the post-office, not far short of a mile. Dropping the letter into the box, he stood against the wall to recover breath. A clerk was standing at the door whistling; and at the same moment a gentleman, apparently a stranger, came out of a neighbouring hotel, a letter in his hand.

'This is the post-office, I believe?' said he to the clerk.

'Yes.'

'Am I in time to post a letter to Bristol?'

'No, sir. The bags for the Bristol mail are made up. It will be through the town directly.'

William heard this in consternation. If it was too late for this gentleman's letter, it was too late for Mr. Ashley's.

He said nothing to any one that night; but he lay awake thinking over what might be the consequences of his forgetfulness. The letter might be one of importance; Mr. Ashley might discharge him for his neglect—and the weekly four

shillings had grown into an absolute necessity. William possessed a large share of conscientiousness, and the fault disturbed him much.

When he got down at six, he found his mother up, and at work. He gave her the history of what had happened. 'Whatever can be done?' he asked.

'Nay, William, put that question to yourself. What ought you to do? Reflect a moment.'

'I suppose I ought to tell Mr. Ashley.'

'Do not say "I suppose," my dear. You must tell him.'

'Yes, I know I must,' he acknowledged. 'I have been thinking about it all night. But I don't like it.'

'Ah, child! we have many things to do that we "don't like." But the first trouble is always the worst. Look it fully in the face, and it will melt away. There is no help for it in this matter, William; your duty is plain. There's Mr. Lynn looking out for you.'

William went out, heavy with the thought of the task he should have to accomplish after breakfast. He knew that he must do it. It was a duty, as his mother had said; and she had fully impressed upon them all, from their infancy, the necessity of looking out for their duty and doing it, whether in great things or in small.

Mr. Ashley entered the manufactory that morning at his usual hour, half-past nine. He opened and read his letters, and then was engaged for some time with Samuel Lynn. By ten o'clock, the counting-house was clear. Mr. Ashley was alone in it, and William knew that his time was come. He went in, and approached Mr. Ashley's desk.

Mr. Ashley, who was writing, looked up. 'What is it?'

William's face grew red and white by turns. He was of a remarkably sensitive nature; and these sensitive natures cannot help betraying their inward emotion. Try as he would, he could not get a word out. Mr. Ashley was surprised. 'What is the matter?' he wonderingly asked.

'If you please, sir—I am very sorry—it is about the letter,' he stammered, and was unable to get any further.

'The letter!' repeated Mr. Ashley. 'What letter? Not the letter I gave you to post?'

'I forgot it, sir,'—and William's own voice sounded to his ear painfully clear.

'Forgot to post it! That was unpardonably careless. Where is the letter?'

'I forgot it, sir, until night, and then I ran to the post-office and put it in. Afterwards I heard the clerk say that the Bristol bags were made up,

so of course it would not go. I am very sorry, sir,' he repeated, after a pause.

'How came you to forget it? You ought to have gone direct from here, and posted it.'

'So I did go, sir. That is I was going, but——'

'But what?' returned Mr. Ashley, for William had made a dead standstill.

'The college boys set on me, sir. They were ill-using my brother, and I interfered; and then they turned upon me. It made me forget the letter.'

'It was you who got into an affray with the college boys, was it?' cried Mr. Ashley. He had heard his son's version of the affair, without suspecting that it related to William.

William waited by the desk. 'If you please, sir, was it of great consequence?'

'It might have been. Do not you be guilty of such carelessness again.'

'I will try not, sir.'

Mr. Ashley looked down at his writing. William waited. He did not suppose it was over, and he wanted to know the worst. 'Why do you stay?' asked Mr. Ashley.

'I hope you will not turn me away for it, sir,' he said, his colour changing again.

'Well—not this time,' replied Mr. Ashley, smiling to himself. 'But I'll tell you what I

should have felt inclined to turn you away for,' he added—'concealing the fact from me. Whatever fault, omission, or accident you may commit, always acknowledge it at once; it is the best plan, and the easiest one. You may go back to your work now.'

William left the room with a lighter step. Mr. Ashley looked after him. 'That's an honest lad,' thought he. 'He might just as well have kept it from me; calculating on the chances of its not coming out: many boys would have done so. He has been brought up in a good school.'

Before the day was over, William came again into contact with Mr. Ashley. That gentleman sometimes made his appearance in the manufactory in an evening—not always. He did not on this one. When Samuel Lynn and William entered it on their return from tea, a gentleman was waiting in the counting-house on business. Samuel Lynn, who was, on such occasions, Mr. Ashley's *alter ego*, came out of the counting-house presently, with a note in his hand.

'Thee put on thy cap, and take this to the master's house. Ask to see him, and say that I wait for an answer.'

William ran off with the note: no fear of his forgetting, this time. It was addressed in the plain form pertaining to the Quakers, 'Thomas

Ashley;' and could William have looked inside, he would have seen, instead of the complimentary 'Sir,' that the commencement was, 'Respected Friend.' He observed his mother sitting close at her window, to catch what remained of the declining light, and nodded to her as he passed.

'Can I see Mr. Ashley?' he inquired, when he reached the house.

The servant replied that he could. He left William in the hall, and opened the door of the dining-room; a handsome room, of lofty proportions. Mr. Ashley was slowly pacing it to and fro, while Henry sat at a table, preparing his Latin exercise for his tutor. It was Mr. Ashley's custom to help Henry with his Latin, easing difficulties to him by explanation. Henry was very backward with his classics; he had not yet begun Greek: his own private hope was, that he never should begin it. His sufferings rendered learning always irksome, sometimes unbearable. The same cause frequently made him irritable—an irritation that could not be checked, as it would have been in a more healthy boy. The man told his master he was wanted, and Mr. Ashley looked into the hall.

'Oh, is it you, William?' he said. 'Come in.'

William advanced. 'Mr. Lynn said I was to see yourself, sir, and to say that he waited for an answer.'

Mr. Ashley opened the note, and read it by the lamp on Henry's table. It was not dark outside, and the chandelier was not lighted, but Henry's lamp was. 'Sit down,' said Mr. Ashley to William, and quitted the room, note in hand.

William felt it was something, Mr. Ashley's recognising a difference between him and those black boys in the manufactory: they would scarcely have been told to sit in the hall. William sat down on the first chair at hand. Henry Ashley looked at him. He recognised him as the boy who had been mal-treated by the college boys on the previous day; but Henry was in no mood to be sociable, or even condescending—he never was, when over his lessons. His hip was giving him pain, and his exercise was making him fractious.

'There! it's always the case! Another five minutes, and I should have finished this horrid exercise. Papa is sure to go away, or be called away, when he's helping me! It's a shame!'

Mrs. Ashley opened the door at this juncture, and looked into the room. 'I thought your papa was here, Henry.'

'No, he is not here. He is gone to his study, and I am stuck. Some blessed note has come, which he has to attend to; and I don't know whether this word should be put in the ablative or the dative! I'll job the pen through it!'

'Oh, Henry, Henry! Do not be so impatient.'

Mrs. Ashley shut the door again; and Henry continued to worry himself, making no progress, except in fretfulness. At length William approached him. 'Will you let me help you?'

Surprise brought Henry's grumbling to a standstill. 'You!' he exclaimed. 'Do you know anything of Latin?'

'I am very much farther in it than what you are doing. My brother Gar is as far as that. Shall I help you? You have put that wrong; it ought to be in the accusative.'

'Well, if you can help me, you may, for I want to get it over,' said Henry, with a doubting stress upon the 'can.' 'You can sit down, if you wish to,' he patronisingly added.

'Thank you, I don't care about sitting down,' replied William, beginning at once upon his task.

The two boys were soon deep in the exercise, William not doing it, but rendering it easy to Henry; in the same manner that Mr. Halliburton, when he was at that stage, used to make it clear to him.

'I say,' cried Henry, 'who taught you?'

'Papa. He bestowed a great deal of time upon me, and that got me on. I can see a wrong word there,' added William, casting his eyes to the top

of the page. 'It ought to be in the vocative, and you have got it in the dative.'

'You are mistaken, then. Papa told me that; and he is not likely to be wrong. Papa is one of the best classical scholars of the day—although he is a manufacturer,' added Henry, who, through his relatives, the Dares, had been infected with a contempt for business.

'It should be in the vocative,' repeated William.

'I shan't alter it. The idea of your finding fault with Mr. Ashley's Latin! Let us get on. What case is this?'

The last word of the exercise was being written, when Mr. Ashley opened the door and called to William. He gave him a note for Mr. Lynn, and William departed. Mr. Ashley returned to complete the interrupted exercise.

'I say, papa, that fellow knows Latin,' began Henry.

'What fellow?' returned Mr. Ashley.

'Why, that chap of yours, who has been here. He has helped me through my exercise. Not doing it for me: you need not be afraid: but explaining to me how to do it. He made it easier to me than you do, papa.'

Mr. Ashley took the book in his hand, and saw that it was correct. He knew Henry could not,

or would not, have made it so himself. Henry continued:—

'He said his papa used to explain it to him. Fancy one of our manufactory's errand boys saying "papa."'

'You must not class him with the usual common errand boys, Henry. The boy has been as well brought up as you have.'

'I thought so; for he has got his impudence about him,' was Master Henry's retort.

'Was he impudent to you?'

'To me? oh no. He is as civil a fellow as ever I spoke with. Indeed, but for remembering who he was, I should call him a gentlemanly fellow. While he was telling me, I forgot who he was, and talked to him as an equal, and *he* talked to me as one. I call him impudent, because he found fault with your Latin.'

'Indeed!' returned Mr. Ashley, an amused smile parting his lips.

'He says this word's wrong. That it ought to be in the vocative case.'

'So it ought to be,' assented Mr. Ashley, casting his eyes on the word to which Henry pointed.

'You told me the dative, papa.'

'That I certainly did not, Henry. The mistake must have been your own.'

'He persisted that it was wrong, although I told him it was your Latin. Papa, it is the same boy who had the row yesterday with Cyril Dare. What a pity it is, though, that a chap so well up in his Latin should be shut up in a manufactory!'

'The only "pity" is, that he is in it too early,' was the response of Mr. Ashley. 'His Latin would not be any detriment to his being in a manufactory, or the manufactory to his Latin. I am a manufacturer myself, Henry. You appear to ignore that sometimes.'

'The Dares go on so. They din it in my ears that a manufacturer cannot be a gentleman.'

'I shall cause you to drop the acquaintance of the Dares, if you allow yourself to listen to all the false and foolish notions they may give utterance to. Cyril Dare will probably go into a manufactory himself.'

Henry looked up curiously. 'I don't think so, papa.'

'I do,' returned Mr. Ashley, in a significant tone. Henry was surprised at the news. He knew his father never advanced a decided opinion unless he had good grounds for it. He burst into a laugh. The notion of Cyril Dare's going into a manufactory tickled his fancy amazingly.

END OF VOL. I.

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